

AN

E N Q U I R Y
INTO THE
M E R I T S
OF
MR. PITT'S ADMINISTRATION;
ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED TO
THE ELECTORS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

BY CHARLES FAULKENER.

"Thou knowest not, my son, with how small a portion of wisdom
"the affairs of great nations are conducted."

Cbanc. Oxenstiern to his Son.

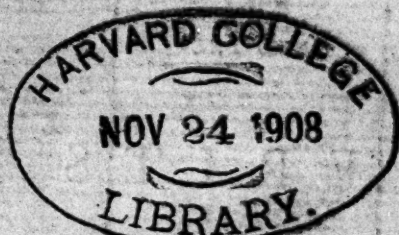
L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW;
J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY; AND J. BELL, OXFORD-STREET.

1796.

B-2027.96.384

~~543374~~



By exchange
New York Public Library

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE

MERITS

OF

MR. PITT'S ADMINISTRATION.

THE Electors of Great Britain, at the next Dissolution of Parliament, will represent for a season the whole Community. Every individual who, in consequence of that event, shall be called upon to give his suffrage, will by that vote, in part, pronounce the approbation, or attest the censure of the people of these kingdoms on their present minister. Yet greatly mistaken are those who can suppose for a moment that the mere fate of a minister is alone at issue. From the return then made the retrospective opinion of the Public will be collected on all the principles he has delivered, and all the measures he has adopted, since they last restored him to political power; and little are they acquainted with the connection which subsists between our public situation and our private happiness, who regard the decision which shall then be made, as a subject of little interest or a duty of trivial importance. There never yet occurred, since the first existence of a Parliament, an occasion when it so highly became the Electors

of this Country seriously to consider, and patiently to examine the principles by which they are guided, and the grounds on which they are determined, in the choice of their Representatives; at no other political crisis was it ever of such immeasurable consequence that the real merits of a minister should be generally investigated and by all be accurately understood. To the Electors therefore of Great Britain the following pages are respectfully addressed, from no desire of offending any Party, and with an humble design of contributing to the benefit of all; and they request from the Reader that patience only which the importance of their subject demands, and that candour which the purity of their intention deserves :

The minister who is not entitled to our applause on great occasions, when the powers of his mind must be particularly called forth, is not likely to be more deserving of our praise in affairs of inferior concern; and even if in these instances he should merit our commendation, he would still be unfit for his situation. This enquiry therefore into the claim which Mr. Pitt can justly be supposed to have on the favour and confidence of the Public, shall not be minute; but shall be confined to the leading features of his administration since the first opening of the French Revolution. By the merits or demerits of his conduct since that important event, the extent of his political talents may be sufficiently estimated, and his character as a minister fairly decided.

The connection between this Country and France is so immediate and natural, that the situation of that kingdom must ever be a subject of particular interest and attention to any minister of Great Britain. From the first opening of the Revolution, Mr. Pitt could not, or ought not, to have been, at any time, indifferent to the events that were to follow. The form of government that was there to be established

must

must often have occupied his thoughts and engaged his anxieties. On this subject an able minister would have formed some settled opinion with all possible expedition, and to that species of constitution which appeared to him on the whole best calculated for the mutual happiness of the two kingdoms, he would from that moment have been at all times solicitous to afford the benefit of his countenance and support. There were evidently three events which might take place in France. The old Constitution might be restored; a Republic might be erected; a limited Monarchy might be established. On these a minister was left to decide, and from them was to select one as the object of his partiality and inclinations.

Early in the Revolution a proposal was made to Mr. Pitt for the destruction of Brest; this proposal, with equal dignity and wisdom, he rejected: and precisely upon the same principles he should have banished from his thoughts all desire of seeing the ancient Government of France again restored. To have wished its re-establishment, because England might be benefited by the misery and degradation of that country, would equally have shewn a disregard for the most obvious principles of national justice; and the adoption of such a wish would have been still more unwise than an assent to the project already mentioned. We are a commercial and manufacturing nation, and are therefore interested in the prosperity of all our neighbours: the more wealthy and numerous are our customers, the more rich and powerful shall we ourselves be; and this principle is true in its fullest extent with respect to Great Britain, even upon principles the most timorous and selfish; because the state which sells will obviously become more speedily rich and powerful than the state which buys—the intercourse is necessarily in favour of the former. In addition to this consideration, of itself sufficient, the effects of the old government of France had evidently been, to keep

Europe continually in a state of war and alarm ; and this Country at least had, for the whole of the last century, never been suffered to repose. A nation, where the interests of the people were so seldom taken into contemplation, and never allowed to stand in the way of the ambition of its rulers, was evidently a band of slaves that might be turned against the neighbouring powers as the caprice or madness of the ruling cabinet directed. From a better government a more reasonable conduct was to be expected ; and for Mr. Pitt therefore to have wished for the restoration of the old government would have been to have reasoned on a petty scale ; and not only to have desired to intercept the progress of human happiness, but to have been guilty of this injustice without a real prospect of procuring any ultimate advantage to Great Britain.

With respect to the erection of a Republic in France, he would have apprehended that such an event might have a tendency to produce restlessness and disorder in England ; and in contemplation of this last possibility he would have been indisposed to the erection of any government in France founded on republican principles : but his wishes and opinion would have been directed, and alone decided, by the consideration that a limited monarchy, which was the next alternative, appears on the whole best adapted to promote the wealth and secure the happiness of large Communities, and was in every point of view the most eligible for France, as being likely to meet the sentiments and be accommodated to the interests of a greater number of its inhabitants than any other form of government, and as being evidently a more natural and easy transition from the last.

The tranquillity and prosperity of France would have therefore been considered by him as most nearly allied to a limited monarchy, while the chance, whatsoever it might be, that

that the contagion of republican principles might reach England, would thus be escaped.

In a limited monarchy then the wishes of a minister of this country would have finally rested; and the accomplishment of this wish he would have endeavoured to effect; but not by hostile interference. No wise and good minister would ever have thought it necessary, or justifiable, or possible, to check or destroy any principles whatever by the argument of the bayonet; yet, every exertion which strict delicacy would warrant, and friendly anxiety would suggest, he would certainly have used to promote the cause he approved. Little exertion however could have been necessary; the situation of England at the beginning of the Revolution is well known, and the most distant intimation of his wishes, or even of his hopes, must have produced an effect the most decisive and important.

But there is one point at least which any good or prudent minister who was a friend to the cause of limited monarchy, either in this kingdom or in France, would have made every possible effort to accomplish; the prevention of the hostile interference of any other Power whatever. It may be urged indeed that Mr. Pitt could not by these means have prevented the progress and triumph of republicanism in France. The answer to this objection is short—it was the best and only chance.

But, had Mr. Pitt's sentiments in favour of a limited monarchy been known to the people and leading men in France, their suspicions of the King would have had a less powerful and fatal influence on their conduct and their deliberations; for they would have thought the insincerity of their monarch of less importance. To the Court better terms might and would have been granted. The one Party would have

have been less disposed to violence, the other more able to resist it. Every moderate man who has visited France during the last five years, or has perused with the slightest degree of attention the late history of that unhappy country, must be aware that the real engines which were employed to bring into discredit, and to weaken and to destroy the Constitution of 1789, were the alledged insincerity of the King, and the expected, and afterwards the actual interference of the combined powers; and it must not be forgotten that the republicans did not at last succeed, till the Duke of Brunswick had published his manifesto, and his army was supposed to be on its march to Paris.

It may next be said, that Mr. Pitt's interference with the powers on the Continent would not have been effectual. The reply is—that he did not make the trial.

The treaty of Pilnitz, so far from being resisted, was, it is said, acceded to by the British Cabinet. If the treaty was such as it has been represented, it is surely not to be supposed that Mr. Pitt would afford it his concurrence. Whatever may be his political vices and defects, he must not, without the clearest evidence, be so far degraded below the level of the most vulgar minister.

Little doubt, however, can be entertained by the calm and unprejudiced, that Mr. Pitt might have prevented the interference of the combined powers. An early intimation of the sentiments of his court, sufficiently general and ceremonious (and if it came from Mr. Pitt, the tone of it could not but have been sufficiently lofty) would have destroyed in their formation all those visionary prospects of injustice and aggrandisement which too fatally influenced the counsels of the great military powers of Europe. The consideration of the impoverished state of their own finances, the extravagant idea
then

then entertained all over the Continent of the power of this country, the opposition they were sure to encounter in France, more especially if openly discountenanced by England; these considerations must soon have put an end to all doubt and deliberation on the subject. If, however, they had commenced hostilities with France, it is now evident and it was always probable that they would easily have been repelled. The expence of an Ockzacow or Nootka-Sound armament would have secured to us that limited monarchy in France (if this had been the known object of our exertions), for the attainment of which we have now incurred the vain expence of an hundred millions.

But it may be said, that through the whole of this reasoning, there is supposed in Mr. Pitt a power of foreseeing in 1789 all the events that have followed, and that it is taken for granted at the same time that, if possessed of this foresight, he could have secured the support of his own Country while endeavouring to prevent the interference of foreign powers. With respect, however, to the first objection, it is evident that there is only supposed in Mr. Pitt a capacity of foreseeing that the combined powers would be disposed to interfere in the affairs of France, and that the people would be agitated and made suspicious of the monarchical part of the Constitution by the reality, or even the expectation of an event of this nature, that this would necessarily lead to violence and outrage, and that a republic must be the probable consequence. It was known to Mr. Pitt that the combined Powers were connected with the cause of the ancient monarchy, one by the ties of blood, and both, as they would themselves imagine, by a sympathy of interests. Mr. Pitt could perceive that the leading men in France did, and could only use the instrumentality of the people to effect the new modelling of the Constitution, and that the former despotism must in all probability have left the people ignorant and unfeeling, and therefore disposed

disposed to violence and outrage. There is only supposed in Mr. Pitt a knowledge of some of the most established principles of human nature ; that men may be hurried by opposition into violence, and that when agitated and inflamed, they are deaf to the voice of reason and insensible to their true interests ; that in this situation they ever forget and abandon the principles and attachments by which they would in other situations have been directed and controuled. Mr. Pitt had seen that the royal Party in America were for a long time possessed of considerable interest ; but, from the moment the British troops landed that influence was daily diminished, and the vote for independence was at last carried with scarcely a dissenting opinion.

With respect to the second objection ; that it is taken for granted that Mr. Pitt could have secured the support of this country while endeavouring to prevent the interference of foreign powers ; it is evident that this assumption cannot reasonably be denied. Mr. Fox, by his coalition with Lord North, had at once destroyed that popularity which he had so hardly and meritoriously earned, and which he had extorted rather than received from his infatuated countrymen. The India Bill put an end to the ministerial influence which he had so unhappily purchased. This influence was transferred, and that popularity was thoughtlessly paid in advance to Mr. Pitt. The remembrance of the father's merits threw a lustre over the rising ambition of the son, and gave a promise, which has not been fulfilled, of hereditary talents and virtues.

That revival of prosperity, and that return of happiness which are the natural effects of the restoration of a peace, in a nation not exhausted, were attributed by the Public with their usual accuracy to the enlightened counsels of their new Premier. No minister was ever yet so popular as was Mr. Pitt at the opening of the Revolution in France. The Re-

volution itself was for a considerable time received in England with approbation and applause, and Mr. Pitt had already attained the art of heating and shaping the blunt understandings and virtuous sensibilities of his countrymen to any degree of warmth or variety of form that his wishes required. Such a minister, under such circumstances, could have found no difficulty but in the cabinet, and that cabinet he could ultimately have controuled by resigning his office *. A post so made vacant, Mr. Fox and every leading member in Opposition would have disdained to occupy. No man could have been found equal to the business of the House of Commons. An Administration could not have been manufactured. Lord Lansdowne, though ambitious, is an enlightened statesman, and would have been on this occasion, no doubt, a friend to his species and to his own fame.

Every one who has attended the debates on the Slave Trade, must be aware of the effect produced, when the eloquence of Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt are united in the same cause; and how must that effect have been increased, if to these had been added the acuteness and sublimity of one, and the energy and fire of many of the leading members of opposition! A Dundas or a Jenkinson, who, on such an occasion, had opposed himself to Mr. Pitt, would have been swept away by the storm, and stupefied and annihilated by the thunder and the lightning with which he would have been surrounded.

Mr. Pitt must have finally prevailed, and should indisputably have decided at all events to stop the interference of the combined powers. Such a decision would have been the decision of benevolence and true wisdom. It would certainly

* "I will not," said Lord Chatham, "be responsible for counsels which I do not guide." Such language would, on the present occasion, have been perfectly becoming in the son, and at any time sufficiently congenial to the hereditary haughtiness of his nature.

have been the decision of Lord Chatham, of Mirabeau, or of Mr. Fox. It would have been so of any minister of real talents and real genius. Such a minister, circumstanced as Mr. Pitt was, would have felt his understanding and his heart expand with his situation. He would have perceived that he in fact held the balance of Europe in his hands; that he was the arbiter of the happiness of millions; that, humanly speaking, he was an instrument in the hand of Providence for the melioration of the condition and the security of the repose of mankind.

Had such been the decision of our present minister, the annals of the years that succeeded would not then have presented to the historian the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, the carnage at the Thuilleries, the massacres of September, the debates of the Convention on the fate of their amiable King, or all the multiplied horrors that on the Continent of Europe, and on the other side the Atlantic, have in ceaseless succession, for these last five years, harassed the feelings and impaired the happiness of every man who could partake of the sensations, or sympathise in the sufferings, of his fellow-creatures.

Such should have been the wishes, and such the conduct of Mr. Pitt.—If these then were his views, he wanted ability to carry them into execution; if they were not, he understood not his situation. But what is the history which he himself gives of his wishes and his conduct?—"He abstained," it seems, "from all interference whatever, and was at last driven into a rupture with France by the violence of the republican party;"—that is, in other words, he has floated on the stream of events with the most puerile imbecility; he has taken no pains to controul them, but is by them controuled; and his country is consequently plunged into all the dangers and difficulties of a war.

Turning

Turning now from the consideration of the conduct of Mr. Pitt with respect to France, let us survey for a moment what has been the ability he has displayed on the theatre of his own country.

On subjects of national importance the generality of men are so unable to think for themselves, that a publication or a speech from those who are, may occasionally produce effects that are scarcely to be calculated. No historian can present a faithful picture of the American Revolution, without admitting into his canvass the pamphlet of "Common Sense;" and he who writes the Annals of the French Revolution will equally be obliged to notice the "Reflections of Mr. Burke." Posterity, who will judge coolly of those times in which they are not themselves to act or to suffer, will be aware, that the Constituent Assembly was, from the first, the great chance and the only hope, for those who wished well to the cause of limited monarchy and practicable liberty in France, and of Alarmists in England. To vilify or even to speak coldly or without approbation of the members of this body, to depreciate their labors, to magnify their errors, to justify the royal party in their opposition to them, to endeavour to excite against them the suspicions and the hatred of this country and of the powers on the Continent, when the result was to be, either, that the antient despotism was to be restored, or the country left to the disposal of men of inferior rank in the state, of less property, and less information, was a line of conduct the most preposterous, that a man like Mr. Burke, animated, as it is natural to believe, by the purest intentions, could possibly have pursued. To a petulance so puerile, to an irritability so dangerous, as was unhappily exhibited by Mr. Burke, the mind of Mr. Pitt should have been, from the first opening of the Revolution, decidedly superior.

The orator and the writer, his pamphlets and his
C 2 speeches,

speeches, an able minister would have taken every opportunity to silence and disapprove. From the high party in this country Mr. Pitt had nothing to fear, but by indulging their intemperance.—On his influence with them, as the minister of this country and the opponent of Mr. Fox, he could with certainty depend.—He should have attached himself to the low party.—He should, at all events, have united himself to the moderate men, wherever they could be found. It must have occurred to him at the same time, that Mr. Burke's pamphlet was too unqualified a defence "of the powers that be," to render any real service to "the powers that ought to be"—it was evident, that it must prove a dangerous friend to any cause which it espoused. Whatever might be its eloquence and its attractions, Mr. Pitt must have been conscious that it contained in no part whatever twenty pages together of correct reasoning. Its brilliancy was sure to attract notice, its declamatory assertions, and inaccurate conclusions, could not fail to render it a victim to any writer that attacked it. The soldiers of the East, by the glitter of their apparel and the costliness of their accoutrements, did but invite the assault and secure the victory of the Macedonian phalanx. While Mr. Burke was sounding the tocsin of his eloquence, and employed in the needless office of encouraging the selfishness and quickening the irritability of his fellow creatures; what the world required, was, if possible, to have been lulled into a transient repose; to have been charmed into a temporary oblivion; to have been soothed and calmed, and persuaded to make a pause; to have escaped from the influence of all it had lately known and still but too feelingly remembered; that extremes might have been successfully encountered and prudently avoided; that opposing interests and opinions might have been mutually conceded, accommodated and balanced; that the good might have had power to execute, what the wise might have had leisure to resolve. Mr. Pitt, at this juncture, seems unfortunately

nately to have been as incapable as Mr. Burke of understanding the real situation of mankind, and the species of conduct which the interests of this country, of France, and of all Europe, at that time required. To this veteran Phaëton was the chariot, in fact, intrusted by our thoughtless Apollo, and the world was immediately on fire.

No interference having been made by Mr. Pitt with the powers on the Continent, the combined armies entered France, and the republicans were consequently enabled to overthrow the monarchy; Fayette was unsuccessful in his endeavours to turn his army against the Jacobins, while that army saw the enemy before them, and had themselves and their country to defend: he was therefore compelled to desert a cause which it was thus made impossible to support. In his flight on neutral ground he was seized by one of the regular powers of Europe, and has been ever since detained in an unnecessary and unmerited captivity.

The Duke of Brunswick, by the skill of Dumourier, by the natural difficulties of his situation, and by his own manifesto, was obliged to retire. France saw expelled from her fields her unprincipled invaders; but her limited monarchy, in consequence of Mr. Pitt's neutrality, was no more.

The Republic being now established in France, it was obviously the policy of Mr. Pitt, by avoiding all hostilities, to preserve to us the exercise of our industry and the enjoyment of our happiness; and, by adhering to a neutrality, to enable us to reap what little benefit was to be derived from the unhappy situation of the neighbouring powers. But during the close of the year 1792, the principles of republicanism had gained, it was thought, a considerable footing among the people of this country: serious designs, it was supposed, were forming to over-power and destroy the constitution; and the French were overrunning Flanders. What conduct was now
to

to be pursued? The answer seems by no means difficult or remote—The laws were to be put in force—the men of property were to be apprised of their danger—the seditious were to be punished—the pulse of the nation, if such an experiment was really found necessary, was to be distantly and delicately felt—and if the people, as it was natural to expect, were perceived to be loyal to the King and attached to the form of government, under which their ancestors had long, and they themselves still, enjoyed the blessings of religion, of social order, and domestic peace; the minister of this country had then no longer any difficulties to struggle with: with respect to this island at least, every thing would then have been secure; and proper laws were to be enacted to provide against any future danger: but the present danger and the future, whatever they might be, were not to be exaggerated or over-rated, but to be opposed and encountered with that calm wisdom and unaffected firmness which every able minister will always display when his views are honourable and his cause is good.

Turning our eyes from our own island, if we found the balance of Europe likely to be destroyed, our mediation was to be offered to the contending powers.—To the Austrians it might have been proposed, to abstain from all further attempts upon France, if their former possessions were restored to them; and to the French, to give up their conquests in exchange for peace. If a temperate and respectful interference had not succeeded, we might then have considered how far it might, or might not, be wise to unite against the refractory power; and if we had been at last compelled to go to war, we should at least have had an intelligible object to pursue, which, if attainable, we might have accomplished—if impracticable, we might have abandoned. If we had found, when we came to offer our mediation, that in the collision of these mighty powers our own allies had been injured,

jured, and our national honour had been wounded, we could then have stated in a simple and conciliatory manner, the nature of our grievances, and the reparation to which we thought ourselves entitled. The consciousness of our own strength would not have betrayed us into a tone of loftiness inconsistent with a real anxiety for peace; having no reason to fear, we should have disdained to bluster; and our own supposed superiority would have allowed us to have waited patiently for explanations without any imputation of fear, and even to have made considerable concessions without the least violation of our dignity.

If we found that no negotiation, however protracted, could have procured satisfaction for the injury which our interests or our honour had received; here too, as before, we should have had a precise point to obtain, and a distinct insult to resent, and we could then have comprehended the justice of our cause and the necessity of our sufferings. And now, from a line of conduct so easy to be traced, so easy to have been pursued, if we turn our eyes to the occurrences of the latter months of 1792 and the opening of 1793, with what grief, with what indignation shall we behold the puzzled and inextricable maze through which the steps of our able minister have conducted us to danger and disgrace! The Parliament summoned in a fortnight—no one could tell why; the militia called out to fight—no one could tell whom; a plot contrived against the government—no one could tell how; an explosion every hour expected—no one could tell where: the Stocks falling—the Tower arming—every man in alarm, and every thing in motion—meetings here, and addresses there—sound and fury in the House of Lords—unanimity in the House of Commons—Mr. Fox thought an idiot, and the measures of Mr. Burke adopted; and, to wind up the sad tale of this strange eventful history—an amiable and virtuous nation plunged into a desperate and disgraceful

disgraceful contest, of which few can comprehend the beginning, and no one can foresee the end.

If an American had been in England at this unhappy period, with what reason would he have congratulated himself, that his own interests and those of his children were entrusted to the administration of a real statesman, too calm and enlightened to misuse, too just and too generous to betray, the confidence reposed in him by the affections of his countrymen ! A subject of the United States, if enquiring at the beginning of 1793, "Why we were going to war ?" would have been told by one, "that it was on account of our allies the Dutch, whom we were bound by treaty to assist."—This idea, however, he must soon have abandoned, for he would soon have been informed "that the Dutch had formally declined the offer of our assistance, and that they had not in fact been attacked." The murder of the King would then have been proposed to him as a reason for our hostilities ; but on finding that it was the King of France, not the King of England that was meant—this reason he must instantly have rejected as evidently insufficient : such a war would have appeared to him in its principle unjust, as waged against the nation, not its rulers, and in its commencement too late, as the unfortunate Monarch was then supposed to be no more. Proceeding in his enquiry, he would have been informed of the opening of the Scheldt—but the next moment would have heard "that the Dutch apprized us, that the Scheldt was a point of no importance, and that the French declared, that they would leave the Belgians to act about it, as they thought proper, at the conclusion of the war, when they were emancipated from the tyranny of the Emperor." The decree of November he might afterwards have understood was the real occasion of the war ; but the next person he had addressed would certainly have told him, "that this decree had been publicly explained away by the French in the most submissive manner,

manner, and was originally the unmeaning gasconade of a moment of exultation and folly.

Turning therefore away to seek some fresh information on the subject, he might next have been acquainted, that the minister from the French Republic was not an ambassador with whom we could treat, and that there was some confusion and difficulty about his being accredited or not accredited. This must inevitably have appeared to him unaccountably ridiculous and trifling. But what would have been his surprise, when he had seen in the public papers a regular correspondence between this very agent, or minister, or ambassador, and the Secretary of State Lord Grenville!—Little able to know what to determine about our ministers, our parliament, or the nation itself, he might afterwards have been taught to believe that we were going to war lest we should be overrun with French principles. This new receipt for the destruction of principles must, no doubt, have been considered by him as singularly safe and effectual: but even here he would have soon found that he was deceived; for he would have discovered that there was scarce a village in the kingdom that had not sent an address to express its detestation of French principles, and that the whole island had resounded with expressions of loyalty to the King and attachment to the Constitution.

“It is for the cause of religion and order that we are ‘to fight,’” might have been the answer returned to his next enquiry. And can such a cause, he would have thought, be served by war?—Perplexed in the extreme, and sick of those proofs of the most outrageous folly with which his observation was every where presented, he might finally have been told, “that it was not for any of the reasons he had heard in particular, that we went to war, but for all of them in general.”—“It is not indeed for any of them,” might have replied

D

another

another more intelligent than all his other informers, with a look of the deepest melancholy, "it is not for any of these reasons." And all that our enquirer could at this moment learn with certainty, if he were even now to renew his investigation, would be, that of human industry there had been squandered away, by England and by France, a stock far exceeding in value three hundred millions of money, and of human existence a sum, of which he who can bear the calculation may go and make the estimate.

Yet, for reasons of this vague and unsatisfactory nature, adopted and declined in this contradictory manner, were the people of this country content to rush into hostilities with France; and the same intemperance of sentiment and indistinctness of reasoning that were observable among the community, were exhibited in the speeches of our ministers and senators. Religion and order supplied a copious subject for the flowing eloquence of Lord Loughborough; a noble Duke considered the war as generally justifiable, and therefore declared he saw no necessity that any particular reasons should be urged in its defence; the decree of November was the theme of Lord Grenville; Mr. Dundas harangued about the Scheldt and the defence of Holland; Mr. Windham expatiated on the danger of French principles; Mr. Powis insisted that negotiation with France was impossible; Mr. Pitt inflamed the passions of the House by descanting on the murder of the King; and Mr. Burke, with his usual contempt for every thing that is temperate and friendly to the peace of mankind, pronounced at once that we were at war already, and that any further discussion was superfluous.

It is fatiguing to comment upon any part of a subject that has been often discussed before; but it is more so, to hear in society the arguments and the pretexts which ministers have made use of to plunge the country into a war, re-
tailed

tailed and appealed to, as reasons in every respect sufficient and conclusive. A few remarks may therefore be still admitted on the original grounds of our hostilities with France; and there seems no criterion that can be less objected to by the defenders of administration, than the letters which passed between M. Chauvelin and Lord Grenville.

Let these letters be perused, and let it then be said, in which are to be discovered a spirit of candour, patience, and conciliation. Qualities of this nature, so necessary to the amicable termination of every dispute, it will soon be seen, are exclusively to be found in the correspondence of M. Chauvelin. This is said however with one exception only. At the end of his first note to Lord Grenville, he tells the British ministry, "that the war will appear to be their war, if they attend not to the peaceful and conciliatory measures that shall have been exhausted by France;" and adds, "that it may not be impossible in such a case to render this evident to the British nation."—To this the reply of our ministers is dignified and proper. On this occasion only, through the whole correspondence, do the parties appear to have interchanged for a moment their tempers and their intellects. The expressions of M. Chauvelin are irritating and unwise—those of Lord Grenville calm and becoming.

A very great presumption in favour of the conciliatory intentions of the French ministers appears, before the letters are perused, from the circumstance of the correspondence being voluntary on the part of the French, and not called for by our ministers, who consider their nation, it is afterwards found, as injured and offended. To come voluntarily forward to explain and to anticipate objections, is never the practice of those who wish for a rupture.

What then are the expressions and the substance of M. Chauvelin's first note to Lord Grenville? "That the intentions of the Executive Council of France towards England have never ceased to be the same; but that they have perceived in the conduct of the British ministry an indisposition which they still force themselves not to believe—That they do not wish the smallest doubt to exist that France is desirous to remain at peace with England—That if the British ministry are alarmed by the decree of November 19, it can only be for want of comprehending the true meaning of it—That the National Convention never intended that the French Republic should favour insurrections, or, in a word, should endeavour to excite disturbances in any neutral or friendly nation whatever—That France will not attack Holland while that power is strictly neutral—And, with respect to the question of the Scheldt—that it is a question of little importance in itself, and that the opinion of England, and even of Holland, is too well known to make it seriously the sole cause of a war."

To this Lord Grenville begins his reply with a discussion about the form and quality in which M. Chauvelin may be treated with.—On this point it is natural to suppose Lord Grenville would have been at least silent, if he had meant the negotiation to terminate amicably. He proceeds to observe, "that M. Chauvelin's explanation of the decree is so far from being considered as satisfactory, that it is looked upon as a fresh avowal of those dispositions which England sees with uneasiness; for that France, by declaring the cases in which the promoters of sedition may look for her assistance, reserves to herself the right of mixing in the internal affairs of England whenever she thinks proper. That, with respect to Holland, France has already attacked

“ attacked that country by opening the Scheldt—That this
 “ question is considered in England as important, from the
 “ principles which France means to establish by that act;
 “ and that, if France is really desirous of maintaining peace
 “ with England, she must shew herself disposed to renounce
 “ her views of aggression and aggrandisement, confine herself
 “ within her own territory, without insulting other govern-
 “ ments, disturbing their tranquillity, or violating their
 “ rights.”

This is surely a style of language, from one independent nation to another, imperious to a degree that is perfectly unprecedented, and by the French minister perfectly unprovoked. Expressions of this nature could never have been used by those who were desirous of avoiding hostilities.

The Executive Power of France, however, unmoved by the uncandid interpretations and the offensive and haughty tone of Lord Grenville's note, submitted to explain their decree at still greater length, and with the most conciliatory patience. Their decree, they declare, “ is not applicable but to
 “ the single case, where the general will of a nation, clearly
 “ and unequivocally expressed, should call for the assistance
 “ and fraternity of the French nation—That sedition cannot
 “ exist where there is an expression of the general will.”—
 They observe, “ That it was not accounted a crime to Henry
 “ IV, or Queen Elizabeth, to have listened to the Dutch;”
 —and at last say, that “ when by the natural interpretation
 “ which they have now put upon it, the decree is reduced to
 “ its real signification, it will be found that it announces no-
 “ thing more than an act of the general will above all con-
 “ test, and so founded in right that it was not worth while
 “ to express it.”

They then discuss at equal length, and with equal pa-
 3 tience,

science, the question of the Scheldt—They observe, “that the French Republic does not mean to establish itself as an arbiter of the treaties which bind nations together.—That it renounces all conquest—that its occupying the Netherlands will continue no longer than the war—and that, if the Belgians, when their general will can be freely declared, consent through any motive whatever to deprive themselves of the navigation of the Scheldt, France will not oppose it.”

To this letter, in which the French Executive Council had made every concession that could reasonably have been required, and certainly prepared the way for still further concessions, if demanded, Lord Grenville replies, “That the declaration of wishing to intermeddle with the affairs of other countries is in the letter of the Executive Council renewed; the right of infringing treaties and violating the rights of the allies of England, is still maintained, by solely offering an illusory negotiation on this subject—that this, as well as the evacuation of the Low Countries, is put off to the conclusion of the war and the consolidation of the liberty of the Belgians.” The letter then concludes with saying, “That, under the present circumstances, preparations will still be continued to put England in a state of protecting her safety, tranquillity and rights; and to set up a barrier to those views of ambition and aggrandisement, dangerous at all times, and still more so, as being supported by the propagation of principles destructive of all social order.”

It is scarcely necessary to remark on the insolence of expecting France to evacuate the Low Countries, without offering to procure for her a peace from the Emperor, with whom she was at war, and from whom she had wrested them by arms and the favourable inclinations of the inhabitants. The imperious tone which is still preserved, and the general terms

terms which are carefully made use of, lest the negotiation should at last be terminated without a rupture, are sufficiently obvious.—Ministers were, it should seem, aware that it would be dangerous to their wishes for war, to express precisely what would be thought satisfactory, lest the French should accede to it; and at last, as it is well known, they ordered M. Chauvelin out of the kingdom, and refused to receive and treat with M. Maret, because he was probably authorized to make such fresh concessions as would have compelled them to abstain from hostilities. However there may be found those who are violent and uncandid enough to assert, that the explanations and palliations of their conduct, which the French offered, were insufficient; no one can with sincerity affirm, that further negotiation was rendered impossible by those explanations and palliations; and it is therefore a mockery of terms to call the war a war of defence, while every possible means to avoid it have indisputably not been tried.

The decree of November was, no doubt, a decree of folly; but should have been considered as such by our ministry, and any explanation of it, which disavowed an intention of interfering in our internal government, should have been gladly accepted. Thoughtlessness and imprudence in the Convention should only have made our cabinet more temperate and wise. Calmness and dignity in our conduct, at least, mankind and posterity might with reason have expected. The opening of the Scheldt was in like manner an act of thoughtlessness and folly, and indeed of offence; but it involved us in no difficulty from which a real statesman would not have extricated us with ease by a cool and expostulatory negotiation. It should not be forgotten that the French had a right to presume that the opening of the Scheldt would not be a subject of offence to Great Britain. The Emperor had,

in

in the autumn of 1786, intimated his intention of opening the Scheldt, as far as the town of Saftingen—in May 1787, he formally demanded this liberty—in August he publicly insisted upon the *unlimited* navigation of the Scheldt in both its branches, to the sea—and in November had the navigation actually extended as far as Saftingen. From the first opening to the conclusion of this transaction the Court of Great Britain was perfectly neutral and indifferent, discovered not during the whole year that her honour or her interest was in the least concerned, issued not a single remonstrance, and demanded not a single explanation.—Still however it may be said, France should not have opened the Scheldt, because it was evident Great Britain, if she was disposed to take offence, might interpret such an act into an act of aggression. Be this admitted—but let the war in that case be traced back to its real cause. That cause is not then the opening of the Scheldt, but originates in that motive, whatever it may be, which first disposed us to take offence. Negotiation is but a mockery, if the real grounds of our alienation or resentment are not produced. And what are we to think of those who can either consign their fellow-creatures to all the horrors of a war, for reasons which they feel ashamed to avow; or who are not desirous to be understood and anxious to be satisfied, while they are carrying on a negotiation on whose awful issue they must be conscious that the lives and the happiness of thousands must depend?

The sentiments with which our ministers first entered upon, and afterwards continued, their correspondence with M. Chauvelin, are made sufficiently manifest by the evidence of their own letters. If any one can be still supposed sincerely to entertain a doubt upon the subject, he will soon come to a decision by the slightest reference to the speeches and declarations of our ministers and senators at that unfortunate

fortunate period; he will find that the illustrious Statesman * who rose superior to the frenzy of the hour, and advised those measures which posterity will think were on this occasion alone necessary and just, was, in consequence of the advice he had given, so nearly considered as an enemy to the interests and the constitution of his country, that he found himself obliged to justify his conduct in a public letter to his constituents. Such, indeed, was at that time the infatuation and fury of Administration, and of those around them, that it is but too apparent that no possible explanations which the French could have made, would have been then received; and no reasonable concessions which they could have offered at that juncture, accepted.

Is this then the war which is on the part of France a war of aggression? After understanding from the minister of the French Republic that their decree meant only to say, "that the French would support the general will of a nation, when that will was so general as to be above all contest," and "so founded in right that the very meaning of the decree was originally not worth making the object of a decree—that the French nation did not mean to make itself an arbiter of the treaties which bind nations together—that it did not wish to give laws to any one—that it had

* Of Mr. Fox it may be remarked, that the people of this country have ever seemed unable to anatomise and look into his mind and his heart, and wisely to capitulate with the faults of the *one* and the foibles of the *other*, in consideration of those transcendent qualities with which both are so eminently endowed. It is his misfortune as a political character, almost on all occasions to get the start of the present age, and to anticipate that wisdom which other men are only taught by experience and events. He rushes forward; is left alone; and when he turns round to point out to his countrymen the path to honour and to happiness, he is hissed at and deserted. However incapable we may ourselves be of appreciating and using the inestimable treasure we possess, posterity will, no doubt, do justice to the rarest political genius, Lord Chatham not excepted, that this island could ever boast.

“renounced, and still renounced, all conquest—that France
 “would not attack Holland while neutral—that the Bel-
 “gians, when independent (and their independence could
 “not destroy the balance of Europe), might negotiate the
 “business of the Scheldt themselves, if Holland or Eng-
 “land made it an object of importance—and that the
 “French, if at last obliged, would combat the English
 “with regret, as a nation they esteemed, though they did
 “not fear,”—after France had thus consented to be cate-
 chised by Great Britain, and humbled herself before her,
 in a manner which no great independent nation ever yet
 did before another in the history of mankind—after passing
 the Alien Bill without explanation—after stopping the ex-
 portation of corn to France, while it was sent to other na-
 tions, without apology—after recalling Lord Gower, still
 without the least reason given or attempted to be given—and
 all these in opposition to a treaty then existing between the
 two countries—after suffering Lord Grenville to write a se-
 ries of public letters, which, if they had been written for the
 purpose of bringing on a rupture, could not have been in de-
 cency more irritating and uncandid—after refusing the letters
 of credence of M. Chauvelin, though to this unmeaning
 form even the proverbial haughtiness of Spain had acceded—
 after ordering him out of the kingdom, and finally repulsing
 Monsieur Maret because he approached us with new and, as
 it is said, unlimited proposals of submission—after all these
 attempts on their part to conciliate, and on ours to provoke,
 is Mr. Pitt, thus situated, to persuade *himself*, or to endeavour
 to persuade *others*, that the war is imposed upon us by neces-
 sity, and reconciled to us by its justice; is a war of defence
 unprovoked and unavoidable; and on the steady prosecution
 of which, our laws and our religion, every thing we value,
 and every thing we revere, is dependent? And shall he af-
 firm this without a blush and without a fear in the presence

of our senate, of the nation, of mankind, and of the God of Peace?—Eternal Being! are thy creatures formed “after thine image?” “Art thou about their bed and about their path?” Are we objects of thy care and illuminated by thy gifts: or is the protection of thy Providence and of our reason sometimes suspended for a season, to make us the scourges of our multiplied crimes, the unconscious instruments of thy justice, and the blind and hapless ministers of thy awful dispensations?

In the occurrences of private life we may often have remarked, that those who account for their conduct by alleging a multitude of reasons, have commonly not had wisdom enough to choose a good one, or are disingenuous enough to conceal the real motive by which they are influenced.—This conclusion may be drawn with equal certainty from similar appearances, when we judge of the conduct of public men. In public, as in private, men are still men; their minds directed by the same general principles, their passions resorting to the same general subterfuges, and to ministers as dangerous and treacherous as to the most insignificant individual. It was on a multitude of reasons that Mr. Pitt rested his justification for involving Great Britain in a war—and it was soon but too evident that his real reason he had not fairly avowed, and that a good reason he had it not in his power to produce. “There was no one,” he gave out, “with whom we could treat,” and M. Chauvelin and M. Maret were dismissed and repulsed: yet he ordered Lord Auckland to negotiate with Dumourier. All internal interference in the affairs of France was formally disclaimed; yet he instantly united with the combined Powers, by whom France had been just invaded, without distinguishing the two causes from each other by any public declaration, or extricating himself from the impolicy and the disgrace of acceding to their principles and participating in their views.

The war was asserted to be a war of defence ; yet Prussia was not called upon for that assistance which by treaty she was in that case bound to furnish. Hostilities were commenced, we were told, to repel the aggression and to check the ambition of France ; yet, when the French were driven back to their own frontiers, our allies secured, and ourselves in a condition to have dictated, or at least to have procured, a peace for all the powers concerned, we became ourselves the invaders of France, and forgot the pretexts by which the war had been originally justified.

Men who act upon one motive and profess another, are continually in danger of falling into a conduct confused and contradictory. Thus the Constitution of 1789 is vilified by Lord Auckland, in January—is acceded to by us and our allies in our negotiation with Dumourier, in April—is, in four days afterwards, rejected and disavowed—is, in August, accepted by Lord Hood—is declined (because not distinctly sanctioned) by a formal declaration, in October—Valenciennes is taken possession of by the Duke of York, in the name of the Emperor—Toulon, for the use of Louis XVII—and the French Islands in the West Indies are seized upon for ourselves. Even if we consent to interpret the real motives of ministers by their public professions, and not by their actions, their speeches and their pretexts have not been decently consistent and distinct.—Whenever their meaning could be extricated from the profusion of general terms in which it was always involved, their objects were originally declared to be, the Scheldt, the Low Countries, the decree of November, the humiliation of the ambition of France, our own defence, &c. &c. But the object of the war afterwards became the destruction of the Jacobin government in France. It was next the cause of monarchy ; then “ to obtain compensation “ and security ;” then security only ; now to obtain such terms as justice to ourselves and to our allies requires ; and, to

to crown our inconsistencies and contradictions, after originally refusing to treat with the Executive Government of France, because it was republican, we are now, it seems, ready to negotiate, though it is still republican, and though some of its present rulers were actually concerned in the murder of the King, and engaged in the most atrocious acts of the Revolution.

This last consideration is not urged as a proof of want of wisdom in Mr. Pitt, for it is the only symptom of prudence that he has yet shewn; but it is mentioned to exhibit the inconsistency of his system of politics, or rather to demonstrate, that he is merely a minister of existing circumstances, and has never acted openly upon any one regular system that can be named.

The end, indeed, which in secret he meant to accomplish, may have been always to himself intelligible, and may not have varied: but what that end may have been, and whether he ever had in reality a good reason for going to war, cannot be as yet with certainty pronounced. For all the reasons that we may have had for the commencement and prosecution of hostilities, may not yet have been produced:—they are a species of annual plants of various promise and appearance, that are gradually unfolded in the spring, begin to fade and sicken towards the middle of the summer campaign, and at the approach of winter sink withered to the ground and are seen no more. Yet one thing may be affirmed, that to common apprehension at least no real good reason has been yet shewn. Men of ordinary intellects know of none but the reason of unavoidable necessity: and that necessity we were certainly not under; for further negotiation was not, when we began the war, impossible or even unpromising.

“Honesty,” it is proverbially said, “is the best policy.”

—Common

—Common adages are but the results of human experience, expressed in short sentences ; and no one who condescends to submit his conduct to their direction will ever be found guilty of material imprudence or error. They are applicable to all situations, public and private. The maxim just alluded to, would be, on the whole, not less useful to a minister, when acting a part on the great theatre of the world, than to an individual in the daily transactions and occurrences of life. A minister, like an individual, would, in consequence of a frank and ingenuous conduct, always have the advantage of being understood and trusted—he too would always secure the cordial assistance of all who were favourable to any cause he espoused, would discover and learn to estimate the opposition he was to encounter, and would thus constantly be enabled to calculate with tolerable certainty the chance of his future success, and to act accordingly. The Machiavelian system of politics has been for some time not only detested, but even suspected of impolicy—they who can stoop to its directions must evidently wade through a sea of disgraceful deceptions, and possibly of the most horrid crimes, and cannot even then expect to be ultimately or permanently successful. There is one service, at least, which Mr. Pitt may probably render to mankind ; it seems natural to expect that he will, however contrary to his intentions, bring into total disrepute a detestable system, which has long been unfriendly to the virtue, and destructive of the tranquillity, of mankind.

But honesty is not only the *best* policy, but the *only* policy. It is not allowed us to act upon one motive, and profess another. The motive which we blush to avow, we ought instantly to abandon.—There is no alternative. Every deception that we practise, diminishes and tends to destroy that general stock of mutual confidence on which the happiness of mankind so essentially depends. Those laws which conduce to the welfare of society are binding, not only on individuals,

viduals, but on nations : a virtuous minister is but a virtuous man acting on a larger scale, with more extensive views and brighter rewards. What is in this manner evinced to be just in theory, is assented to by the opinion of mankind. National justice and national honour, and even ministerial justice and honour, are not words without a meaning. Mr. Pitt has, it seems, of late stepped forth the assertor and defender of the former, and would, no doubt, propose himself as an example of the latter. Can he exclude from either the principle of sincerity?

Yet, let us consent for a moment to suppose that a minister, though really acting upon one motive, may, consistently not only with policy but with justice, pretend to act upon others, if by this means he is more likely to accomplish the end he has in view. Let us admit, for the sake of argument, this false and odious principle in its fullest extent, and let us then consider briefly, whether it has been applied with any degree of dexterity by Mr. Pitt in the prosecution of hostilities with France.

At the commencement of the war there were evidently in and out of France two descriptions of Frenchmen—those who were desirous to see the ancient monarchy restored, and those who were attached to the Constitution of 1789: but these parties were perfectly hostile to each other; and of one it was evident that a choice was to be made, or the cause of both at once abandoned. The Emigrants were to be supported, or the Constitutionals defended. It was clearly possible to decline both these systems of policy without obtaining the advantages of either, but not possible at the same time to acquire the benefits of both. No law is more general than that he who depends on two opposite parties for assistance will receive the natural and complete co-operation of neither; yet, into an error so glaring did our minister immediately fall.

fall. The cause of the Allies was first espoused, and yet the proposals of Dumourier to attempt the re-establishment of the Constitution of 1789 were soon afterwards accepted and sanctioned. A support of the same Constitution was no sooner distinctly avowed by our Admiral, Lord Hood, than a Declaration was immediately published, and the whole resolved into a support of monarchy in general—not of the constitutional monarchy of 1789, not of the ancient monarchy; but of either or neither, just as our own convenience, or caprice, or interest required*. From no speech of our ministers or written memorial whatever could it be distinctly seen that we heartily inclined to either cause, and for ever abandoned the other: all that could with any probability be discovered, was, that we meant to make use of the supporters of both, and to reconcile contradictions. The result it was easy to foresee: we derived no general or important assistance from either. We at last united with the most violent supporters of the ancient despotism (a cause which had already failed under the Duke of Brunswick, when alone there was an hope of its success), and even then were not supported by, or did not ourselves support, the emigrants, till all rational prospect of an impression on France by the arms of those who wished for the return of the old monarchy, was at an end.

Such then was the ability which our minister displayed, even if we allow him to act upon the most unlicensed principles of policy and intrigue. At no period could any Frenchman be assured, that by joining our standard he should really and ultimately support the cause he loved. They who wished well to their country, and who formed their wishes on rational principles of practicable liberty, must have seen with

* See the Declaration published by Great Britain, in October 1793—a genuine specimen of the vague, indefinite, and unsatisfactory language held by Administration on the subject of French affairs during the whole course of the war.

despair the ungenerous duplicity of our conduct; but to no Frenchman whatever could it have been thoroughly satisfactory or even intelligible. We reverence the feelings, we are interested in the fate and the fortunes, of those who, whatever may be their principles, are prepared to shed their blood in support of the cause they have adopted. To leave men of this description perplexed and ignorant to what party they should give their wishes and their assistance, and to what point they could best direct the exertions of their hands and the emotions of their hearts, was an impolicy more glaring, and a cruelty more extended, than has often been paralleled in the annals of mankind. With what poignant indignation must we at the same time survey the spectacle of two furious nations drawn out to encounter each other; while the subject of their hostilities was not distinctly ascertained and told; and while it was on this account impossible for those who were attacked to know by what apologies, concessions, or possible sacrifices, tranquillity might be restored!

But reflections of this nature indispose us to all reasonable candour and temperate discussion. Let it then be observed, that these pages do in no place mean to impute to Mr. Pitt deliberate cruelty, or intentional disregard of the happiness of his fellow-creatures. The self-delusions of the human mind are infinitely various and inexplicably powerful; to every good man who is capable of serious thought they are at all times a subject of painful anxiety and unceasing alarm. Our minister, it may fairly be supposed, intended not to be cruel any more than he meant to be impolitic; but the effects of his want of ability are the same, whatever be his disposition or his views: and the people of this country would do well to consider, when Parliament is next dissolved, to whom they dispose of their suffrages, and on what grounds the testimony of their approbation is solicited. They would do well to reflect that, holding the rank which, it is still to be hoped,

Great Britain will ever do, in the scale of nations, it must at all times be a subject of more importance than can immediately be calculated, both to ourselves and to others, whether our councils are directed by a real statesman, whose temperate and perspicuous wisdom may protect and advance the interests of his fellow-creatures, or are governed by some plausible orator, the measures of whose rash and puzzled administration may extend to a degree unprecedented, and perhaps perpetuate the miseries of mankind and the degradation of the human race.

Passing then from the consideration of the injury which every cause, but that of the Republic, received from the doubtful and impolitic conduct of Mr. Pitt, his panegyrist will be but little relieved by turning to survey the measures which he adopted with respect to those independent powers of Europe, who were, or who wished to be, neutral. Their names, if mentioned, will be sufficient to recall to our minds the history of our ignorance, our insolence, our injustice, and our meanness: for such, in fact, is the brief history of our conduct towards the governments of Denmark, Switzerland, Tuscany, and Genoa. America too, if her administration had been like our own, we should have forced into a rupture: and our friends in Holland, in defiance of their entreaties, we stepped forward to defend; and, by refusing to allow them to retain that neutrality which was their only defence, we at last ruined. Protectors of the rights, and supporters, as we professed ourselves to be, of the laws of nations, there is scarce a law or a right whatever of neutral and independent nations which we have not openly broken or grossly offended.

The connections that we formed, our subsidies and our loans, are all points that are not to be forgotten; though to enter into a discussion of each, or of any of them, may, at present, perhaps, be a task fatiguing and unnecessary.

The

The advice which Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, when these subjects were debated in Parliament, received from the instinctive wisdom of Mr. Fox, and the enlightened experience and extensive information of Lord Lansdowne*, is on record; the manner in which that advice was received is also sufficiently known; and the period will probably at length arrive when it will be sufficiently lamented. Advice, indeed, the most evidently wise, Mr. Pitt has, from the year 1792, not only been unwilling to accept, but from the first opening of the Revolution has been unable to draw conclusions the most obvious from the events that were presented to his observation.

From the first moment that the Tiers-Etat had succeeded in gaining over a sufficient number of the clergy and the nobility to vote themselves a National Assembly, and had proceeded to new-model the government, two striking lessons ought to have been deeply impressed on the mind of Mr. Pitt—the danger of political abuses, and the danger of a great national debt; the wisdom of making timely reforms, as soon as, or before they are demanded, and the intolerable folly of suffering a State to exceed the income which can be paid by its subjects with cheerfulness and ease. Yet, in the very same year did he refuse to do away so insignificant and unmeaning, though so irritating, an abuse as the Test Act. From that moment, though originally a patron of reform, he has treated every attempt of the kind with all possible hostility; and suffered Lord Grenville to express himself in terms

* This Nobleman should not be mentioned by Englishmen but in terms of the sincerest gratitude. He has saved the country, by a peace, once already, and was not wanting to her interests at the close of 1792, and beginning of 1793. The difference between a great statesman and a mere minister may be seen by comparing any of the speeches of Mr. Pitt (for they are all the counterparts of each other) with the speech delivered by the Marquis, introductory of his motion for Peace, Feb. 17, 1794.

only calculated to produce a rupture, in his letters to M. Chauvelin; though he knew that this Country, if a war could not be avoided by negotiation, was to enter upon that war with a debt already incurred of 257 millions, and that the interest of a sum not less than 170 millions more * was annually to be raised for the support of the Peace-establishment, the Civil List, and other inevitable expences of Government, which are now interwoven with the Constitution itself. He who surveys with so little attention, or with so little benefit, the interesting and awful events that have passed before him, may be popular, and may be eloquent; but has surely no pretensions to the character of a provident and prudent minister, on whose anticipating wisdom and steady coolness a nation can repose itself with confidence and security.

The pretensions of Mr. Pitt to the character of a statesman, since the year 1789, having been generally discussed, his conduct as a war minister might next be examined; but it may fairly be asserted that such an examination could not hope to engage the attention of the reader—where no doubt can be well entertained, no interest can well be excited. The want of system, of vigour, and of dispatch, in the conduct of administration, may on some occasions be so evident and glaring, that any further comment would be unnecessary and unmeaning †.

The

* The Select Committee, in 1791, stated the expected expenditure upon a permanent Peace-establishment, including the annual million for the Sinking Fund, at 15,969,178l. or nearly 16 millions.

† Amidst a cheerless waste there is one bright spot—the victory of the 1st of June. If ministers sent Lord Howe with a fleet inferior in number to that in Brest water, for the purpose of tempting the French to hazard an engagement, it was a bold and judicious manœuvre, justified by the skill, courage, and discipline of our sailors; but this was not at the time asserted to be the case, and is rather inconsistent with the expectations, which ministers then avowed of an invasion. Admiral Montague

The administration of Mr. Pitt will always be remembered in the annals of the civilised world, and must ever be distinguished in the history of our own Constitution. The appearance which it will make in the former has been already, however imperfectly, delineated; in what colours it will be hereafter represented in the latter, ought now to be considered. The minds of men, however, are at this period so irritated and inflamed, that, as a candid hearing could not possibly be obtained, a free and direct investigation of the subjects which such a consideration would include, must at present be waved. Yet is this an investigation, it must on the other hand be confessed, which ought thoroughly to be made by every elector in Great Britain before he presumes to give his vote to any candidate whatever, who has hitherto extended his countenance and support to our present administration. Some slight remarks on the nature of Government in general, and a few allusions to the situation of our internal politics, shall therefore be made; and the application of Mr. Pitt's conduct, to the whole that shall be offered, must be left without further comment to the discretion of the reader.

The great majority of mankind are constantly and anxiously employed in making provision for the day that is passing over them. Ignorant and unaccustomed to the exercise of their faculties on subjects of importance, they are unequal to the task of thinking coolly and of reasoning correctly; they are therefore little able, it must be confessed with sorrow, thoroughly to understand their political interests; and this inability has been always, and is likely still to continue, an insuperable objection to any form of Government, where the influence of the people can be directly employed or continually

Montague neither joined our fleet, nor had strength enough to take the French convoy from America. Lord Hood was in the mean time in the Mediterranean, on no business of equal importance to the capture of a considerable part of all the merchantmen belonging to France.

felt.

felt. That power therefore, which they are incapable of using, must be entrusted to those few among them, who, by their virtue and their talents, may be enabled to stand in the breach and save them from themselves. Yet, such is the unhappy constitution of human nature, that one difficulty is no sooner avoided, than another is encountered; and if every thing is to be apprehended from the many, much is also to be feared from the few. The people may be hurried, it is true, into the most horrid excesses, by the arts and harangues of wild and furious Demagogues; but they are not less exposed, on the other hand, to the arts and harangues of plausible and presumptuous ministers. By the one they may be urged to madness, by the other deluded into ruin. The power, indeed, which the minister of every regular Government has of deceiving the community, is but too unlimited; the real circumstances of the case cannot often be known: the deception, how gross soever, is sufficient to answer the temporary purpose for which it was employed; and before, or even after it is detected, it is swept away from the mind by the influx of new events, fresh delusions, the more interesting occupations of business, or the frivolous avocations of trifling amusements: and thus will it invariably be found, that even when the people might be expected to understand their political interests, they are never unanimously agreed except when their opinion is inaccurate and erroneous; and that what is called a national cry is sure to originate in some stupid prejudice, some furious misapprehension, or some gross delusion, and to have for its object the oppression of a few unresisting dissenters from the national religion, the degradation of some enlightened patriot, or the prosecution of some calamitous war.

Power, when committed to the many, becomes inevitably the destruction of all; but its effects are not less certainly injurious even when entrusted to the few. Given where it may, it has for ever a tendency to intoxicate and corrupt.

The

The captain of a slave ship, the driver at a plantation, the jailor, or the minister, may not be men more adapted by nature than others to acts of cruelty and folly; but the plenitude of their power impairs in a degree very nearly proportionate to the measure in which it is enjoyed, the vigour of their understandings and the sensibility of their hearts. From these general reasonings may be immediately seen the real merits of our invaluable Constitution, and more particularly the danger of having a popular minister. The effect of our Constitution is, to rescue us from the many, and in a great degree to protect us from the few; but this protection can be but imperfectly enjoyed, if we add to the natural influence of the situation of a minister, the preponderating weight of our own partiality. To be governed by a minister of this description, more especially if he has nothing to fear from his rival, is a misfortune the most complete that, politically speaking, we can have to sustain. The whole effect of the Constitution is thus in fact for a season destroyed, and we are in the singular situation of being at once exposed to the many, and to the few; and to the action and re-action of the follies and passions of both. A minister, so unhappily equipped with patronage, popularity, and security from his opponents, will conceive and will find his power to be almost without a limit. In his disputes with foreign powers he will consequently be irritating, insolent and unreasonable; in debate at home, positive, petulant and over-bearing. His Country he will involve in a war, without a fear or a pause, with any nation, and on any occasion, about a river or a corn ship, a few smugglers, or an insignificant fortress in a distant country. Is he defeated in his schemes? Another trial must be made. Was he told from the first that his enterprises were impracticable? It is an additional reason to persevere. Are they again tried and found hopeless? They are not to be given up; for the enemy, he will affirm, must be ruined first. And thus perhaps will the nation go on; he providing madness,

and

and they money ; and as he at least is never likely to stop, if he must in consequence acknowledge and retract his errors, well may the nation petition Heaven for success, for it is their only chance of safety.

Similar causes, on subjects not essentially different, are productive of similar effects. Human beings in a night cellar, like human beings in a cabinet, abuse the power which they feel to be uncontrolled. The most dreadful outrages must inevitably be the consequence. And in two great nations of the earth, in times not remote, have been exhibited two striking examples for the eternal instruction of posterity, of the blindness of those who talk of "confidence in ministers," and the thoughtlessness of those who harangue about "the sovereign will of the people." And here, perhaps, it may briefly be remarked, that on this, or indeed on any abstract principle of right, dependence can never safely be placed as a rule for political conduct. In politics, as in morals, what is expedient is right ; and when that can be discovered, as at all times it sufficiently may, further discussion is but folly, and contest error.

But ministers, whether popular or not, should at all times be suspected of an inclination to encroach upon the Constitution. They are always under a temptation to break down the walls and to burst through the gates of any edifice, however beautiful, in which they are confined. Restraint is to all men an evil, to some a torment, yet is made tolerable when familiarized by habit. The prisoner who knows escape is impossible, bends the powers of his mind to accommodate himself to his lot. Such is in every government the double merit of reforms. They make the edifice more secure, and ministers less unruly : they supersede the necessity of guards and sentinels, of alarm bells, and possibly of rencontres : they enable the Constitution to take care of itself.

In

In the body politic like the human, all diseases are best encountered when they first appear. The system is then stronger, the attack weaker. Ministers should be instantly expostulated with when they first deviate from the rule by which they ought to be directed; for their errors are then resisted with the greatest ease, and are by them likely to be abandoned with the most good humour. In no free country, indeed, can danger possibly exist, but from ministers themselves, while the people are tolerably at ease, and the organs of their government remain respectable; a disposition to sedition cannot produce any serious effect, unless it is possessed of some constitutional organ through which it can be heard and felt. Had the King of France been able to levy money without being obliged to resort to any constitutional forms whatever, the original patriots of France would have had no organ through which to act, and the Revolution might have been delayed for an age. Yet, as the public debts of a nation may be increased till the effects are intolerable; as discontent, if long unappeased, may, by mining unseen, ripen into sedition, sedition into resistance, and an explosion be at last produced; every friend to the happiness of a community will always labour to render the organs of its constitution as pure and as free from objection as they can possibly be made, that those who are discontented may be satisfied to abide by the decisions of that Constitution, or of those organs, and ashamed to appeal to any other tribunal.

Laws which impose silence on public discussion should ever be attended with reforms. Their wisdom, even if agreeable to the existing Constitution of the State, may be doubted; their policy, even if that Constitution was at the same time in other respects improved, may still be questioned: they irritate the disorder, and create the evil they mean to destroy. *Ætna* is but the less disturbed because it has a volcano at the top. There is always an advantage in having the discontented

G

heard.

heard. In this manner they exhaust themselves, and are then inclined to rest. We discover their strength, if we are desirous to oppose them—we learn their wants, if we have wisdom enough to be desirous of relieving them. The number of those who can entertain a serious design to overthrow the Constitution of their country, must be always inconsiderable, if that Constitution be, on the whole, well calculated for the happiness of the community, and be tolerably administered. To dissuade men from practical resistance, there at all times exist reasons powerful and innumerable; and even if there be found men on whom they fail effectually to operate, such men are only rendered formidable by those ministers who increase the public burdens.

But governors, whatever be their apprehensions, should be anxious, while it is in the least consistent with their common safety, to conceal their own alarm. The existence of serious disaffection should not be readily announced; for the possibility of its success must at the same time be implied and intimated. Appeals to the people are only to be justified by circumstances of the most overruling necessity, lest they be taught too often and too fully the secret of their own physical strength. Inordinate alarm is always interpreted into a consciousness of internal weakness; and as all governments ultimately and really depend for their continuance on the favourable opinion of the community, wise governments will be at all times careful how that opinion is questioned or disturbed. If an appeal, however, of this nature must necessarily be made, the sentiments of the people, if they are once ascertained to be favourable, should from that moment be acted and presumed upon with confidence. Governors should seize with eagerness the opportunity which is thus presented to them of engaging the love and attracting the respect of those they govern, by the lenity of their measures and the magnanimity of their conduct. The violent proceedings of the Whigs on the accession of the House of Hanover, contributed in no small degree

gree to the rebellion that took place in 1715; the executions that followed the battle of Culloden in 1745 were prejudicial to the cause they were intended to serve; and State prosecutions, when the people are once withdrawn from a prospect of their danger, will only tend to awaken their compassion for the punishment of those whom they will then be inclined to regard as the victims of unfortunate ignorance, deluded folly, or mistaken virtue. Governors, by the mild and useful policy of the constitutions under which they act, are in general vested with a power of pardoning the crimes of those who are convicted of treason. This power should convey to them an hint of considerable importance; they should infer the wisdom of forbearance, from their having received the power of forgiveness. In the conduct of our affairs it is at all times serviceable to recollect any principles applicable to our own situation, which may have been laid down by others, when evidently disengaged from prejudice and irritation. Such principles, it is natural to suppose, will be agreeable, even in our own case, to the dictates of sober reason and practical prudence; and by resorting to them with attention, we seem to summon to our assistance, from the ages that are past, such counsellors and friends as we cannot otherwise expect to find. Disposed therefore as governors should always be, to decline rather than to urge the prosecution of State offenders, their deviation from the rules of good policy is the most violent that can well be imagined, when they institute prosecutions which they are afterwards unable to support. The quantity and the quality of their evidence they can themselves consider and appreciate before it is produced. On these occasions, whenever they miscarry and are foiled, they are not only disgraced themselves, but the general cause of all government whatever is brought into disrepute, and every virtuous and reflecting man is compelled to acknowledge that he is ashamed of the spirit of their counsels, and alarmed at the incapacity which the folly of their measures betrays.

Such are the general principles to which, if in themselves just and reasonable, the conduct of Mr. Pitt ought patiently to be referred and applied by every Elector before his suffrage is given at the next Dissolution of Parliament. To the inhabitants of this country no object, it seems universally allowed, can be of more serious importance than the stability of our invaluable Constitution. That Constitution, by Mr. Pitt's administration, has been, at least, it will be allowed by all, most materially affected; and whether weakened or confirmed, impaired or improved, is a question which it highly becomes us all diligently to examine and faithfully to decide.

But the existence of this Constitution is much more intimately connected with the effects of our national debt than is commonly imagined; and by the same effects is the individual prosperity and comfort of every inhabitant of these kingdoms much more nearly and seriously influenced, than is generally apprehended. At the time that our minister was pursuing the line of conduct at the close of 1792, and opening of 1793, which has been already traced out and submitted to the consideration of the people of this country, Great Britain, it should never be forgotten, was involved in a debt of 250 millions: it was evident that this debt would be seriously increased by a war with France; and how far these considerations ought or ought not to have checked the precipitance, lowered the haughtiness, and powerfully influenced the conduct of Mr. Pitt during that unfortunate period, is a question which can never be thoroughly investigated and decided upon the whole of its merits, but by those who are distinctly acquainted with the nature and consequences of a national debt. It must be remembered at the same time, that we have seen our minister, year after year, adding loan to loan, and subsidy to subsidy, without once offering peace to our enemies in any terms that were precise and intelligible,

or

or indeed upon any notified conditions whatever. On the whole of this policy, for these last three years, no accurate and adequate judgment can in like manner be formed, but by those who already understand the operation of loans and subsidies, and the maintenance and equipment of fleets and armies, upon our national wealth and power. Fully therefore to explain to the electors of our next representatives in Parliament the claim of Mr. Pitt to the favour and approbation of the public, the effects of a national debt must be distinctly traced. To these reasons, sufficient of themselves to induce the writer of these pages to undertake, and the reader to attend to, a slight delineation of the effects of a public tax, it must be added, that a just idea of the present situation of this country can alone be formed by those who are aware of the consequences of a national debt. By the nature of that situation the vote of an elector may be materially influenced. It is sufficiently evident that we are likely to obtain, not only a better, but a speedier peace, through the medium of any new administration whatever. Ministers are men of like passions with ourselves; and the passions of our present ministers are, on the question of peace or war, most unhappily opposed to the safety and prosperity of their country. Experience at the same time has already apprised us, that we are not to expect temper from Mr. Windham, candour from Mr. Pitt, virtue from Mr. Dundas, or prudence from the collected counsels of the cabinet. The French, indeed, we are told, have no order, no commerce, no valuable constitution, and no equitable laws; they have nothing therefore to lose in the contest—and we have every thing——

A national debt requires the yearly payment of its interest, and this can only be discharged by the returns of annual taxes. The joint effect of all taxes may be comprehended from considering the operation of any one particular

cular tax ; and this operation may be immediately explained in the following manner :

If I purchase a hundred weight of sugar, I must pay in the price, the planter who raised it, the merchant who brought it, the agent who sold it, the grocer who retailed it, and the 15s. duty which was paid at the Custom-house to government. I have consequently 15s. less to buy food for myself, or clothing, to expend in agriculture, to invest in a manufacturing capital, to risk in any commercial adventure, or to turn to any other employment whatever. The injury thus done to the wealth of the State is obvious. Every man is useful by the articles which he consumes and by those which he produces ; by his consumption which calls forth produce ; by his productions which supply consumption. By taxes both are affected and diminished ; yet it is by the mutual action and re-action of both that life is multiplied and existence blessed ; that Great Britain is still able to sustain the burden of her debts, and that the Constitution is not yet destroyed by the folly of our ministers and our own infatuation.

One conclusion, among many others, is already deducible from what has been now observed. This conclusion is, that a tax which falls upon the rich alone, is not therefore harmless, or indeed unfelt by the poor. Whoever pays it, will be thereby possessed of less to set the industry of others in motion—he will consume less, he will produce less directly, he will cause less to be produced indirectly by others : all will be affected—for the State exists but by the action and re-action of consumption and produce,

Taxes however must be laid on articles of general consumption, for they are otherwise not sufficiently productive ; such taxes must touch upon the articles that are more or less necessary to the industrious part of the community, and consumption

sumption and produce will thus be every where affected and diminished. The labourer, for instance, in consequence of such taxes, applies to the farmer for an increase in his wages : but this the farmer is less able and less willing to grant than he would have been before ; for he himself finds that his own comforts and necessaries are made dearer to him than formerly. He applies, however, to the landlord, as did the labourer to him, and the landlord is for the very same reasons less able and less willing to lower the rent.

As the rent of the landlord is less equal to the task of procuring him the comforts and necessaries of life, he is less able and less willing to lay out upon the farm that money, and to make those repairs and improvements which it is the province of the landlord to do. If the landlord cannot do justice to the estate, the farmer cannot ; and agriculture is thus by a national debt made to decline. Though the labourer be enabled to raise his wages, agriculture is not on that account protected from injury. The farmer and the landlord will have it less in their power to use his industry to its full effect, and to give it all the advantages of which it is susceptible. But it is to be observed, that the labourer may live with many of the comforts of life within his reach ; he may live with few, or he may exist without any : it is only in this last situation that he can raise his wages, and this increase will not be in proportion to the alteration in his condition ; the demand for his labour is not any where so great, he must submit to be worse fed, worse sheltered, and worse clothed—he becomes consequently less happy. If he has heard of any country where the necessaries of life are cheaper, he is made restless, perhaps seditious ; or his spirits may sink and his disposition to industry decay—he is content to have his children relieved by the parish, he looks forward to it himself, he knows that he cannot absolutely starve, and with this he is sullenly satisfied. This last consideration confirms him in his sluggishness,

ness, and tempts him to stay where he is, instead of looking round for more lucrative employment, if such employment can any where be found; and if such an experiment can be legally made: and such is the effect of a national debt upon our agriculture, and such the useful assistance which is rendered by the system of our poor laws:

The effect upon our manufactures may be shewn in the same manner. The manufacturer, in consequence of every tax which he pays, is less able to do justice to himself and to those whose industry he puts in motion, by the extension of his credit, by the purchase of his materials, and by the perfection of his machines. By a process of reasoning exactly similar to that which has been already used, the operation of a tax to discourage manufactures may be traced through all the consequent diminution of the strength and spirit of all concerned. The workman, indeed, may, in this country, more easily raise his wages than the labourer; for the manufactures, from various causes, are in high demand: but this increase of wages tends but to the injury and ruin of the nation, his master, and himself; for the extension of the sale of our manufactures is by this means checked, and the present sale diminished both at home and abroad.

The same general reasoning may be applied, not only to the farmer and the labourer, the manufacturer and the workman, but to the capitalist of every description, and those he employs. The injurious operation of a tax will consequently reach to commerce, which will necessarily have less produce to take to other nations in exports, and less to bring to our own in imports.

Such is the direct effect of a national debt on every distinct chain of employment in society; but, unfortunately for those countries where taxes are to be levied, there is no chain

chain of employment whatever that is not materially affected by the condition of every other chain of employment in the community. If the labourer cannot afford to consume sugar, the planter can only raise, the merchant bring, the agent sell, and the grocer retail it to the farmer and the landlord; if the farmer cannot afford to purchase it, to the landlord only; if he cannot afford to purchase it, or any other of the head links in the different chains of employment, the business is at an end. This reasoning extends to all produce whatever, and shews how a national debt tends, not only directly but indirectly, to diminish our consumption and produce. Again it is to be noted, that every man who finds his own guinea of less value to him than it was before (and this is the consequence of a tax, for the tax constitutes a part of the price of every article) will, on that account, charge more upon every article which he produces, or which passes through his hands: it is thus that the price of every commodity acts and re-acts upon the price of every other; and thus does it unfortunately happen, that no one article of general consumption can be taxed without tending to raise the price of every other article consumed. All this is seldom perceived or understood; and society may be said, in this manner, to suffer without knowing it. If, however, the capitalist, or manufacturer, finds he cannot tell why that he is unable to support himself in the style which is agreeable to him, and more especially if he is often exposed to the visits of the tax-gatherer, they will both be disposed to remove; and if, in consequence of a new war, the weight that pressed upon them before is made still heavier, they may take along with them, or themselves join, the labourer in his emigration to some other country; that is, in other words, the same ship may, in consequence of our taxes, carry out of the island almost every thing that is valuable together.

It is thus that a national debt tends to weaken the attachment

tachment of our people to the government, lessens or destroys our produce, the exports of the surplus of our produce, and our consumption, under all their varied appearances, and in all their multiplied and endless relations; and the existing quantity of these, it should never be forgotten, is the exact measure of the quantity of life and happiness that is at any time to be found within the island.

It is next to be observed, that it is only from the revenue, which these can supply, that the interest of the funded national debt is to be paid. With the payment of this interest, and of more than this interest, the existence of our Constitution is now interwoven: though this interest should be discharged, the King's Civil List is still to be paid, and the expence of our other establishments. It is thus by wars that the Constitution is brought into danger, and will probably at some future period be precipitated into ruin: and such is the wisdom of those who rush into hostilities with foreign nations upon principles of loyalty to our sovereign, and such the enlightened prudence of those who engage in a war abroad for the sake of keeping peace at home!

These then are the effects of a national debt and of annual taxes upon the prosperity and Constitution of this country. A national debt may, indeed, be prevented by different causes from visibly producing all the effects that have been thus delineated; but it tends to produce them, and does, in fact, produce them to a certain extent. Though its full operation is at present overpowered and concealed, the weight is not the less in the one scale because it is overbalanced by opposing weights in the other. The American war was long, expensive, and bloody; yet, in a few years after the conclusion of the peace, we again became a nation eminently prosperous and happy. It has been hence inferred, that a national debt is in itself harmless, and that its increase is a

subject

subject of no political importance or rational alarm; but no conclusion can be more unwarrantable, or unhappily more dangerous to ourselves and others. A part of the price of every article continues to be paid to discharge the interest of our debt. Though the article may still be within our purchase, that part of the price will grow greater as the interest to be paid increases. It may not as yet be sufficiently large to stop the produce and consumption of the article; but it may at last become so. Till that shall be the case, the balance, as it may be called, still remains in favour of the article and of the nation; and this balance will continually operate more and more to the advantage of both. The profits of our industry may be so great as still to leave a difference in our favour, by means of which that industry may be still further increased and invigorated. Money, as it has been often said, produces money. National prosperity will always be found to answer to the Poet's description of Fame—

Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo—

It thrives by motion, its velocity is accelerated as it goes on. But the converse of all this reasoning is equally true, and we ought anxiously to take care that this balance in favour of the article is not by taxes too materially diminished. The decline of a nation is hastened in like manner by the contrary operation of those principles which would otherwise have increased the rapidity of its rise. Our prosperity may be great, but it is not on that account as great as it might otherwise have been. Its progress is not the less restrained and retarded, merely because it has on the whole a tendency to go on.—The effects of the American war, and of all our wars, still exist and operate, though they are overpowered and counterbalanced, and therefore, to vulgar apprehension, annihilated and removed, by the operation of other causes and the weight of other advantages. The effects of our free government upon the morals and industry of our people, the ad-

vantages of our insular situation, the almost exclusive possession of coals, one of the most important requisites in most manufactures; our science, our arts, and the capital which has been so long accumulating in consequence of these advantages—these are causes which may still support and even increase our national wealth and prosperity. Notwithstanding the counter operation of our annual taxes, there are causes which may enable the spring of our commerce to recover from the pressure of war, even during the continuance of war; and empower us, when peace has been a few years restored, to waste again, upon some unreasonable pretension or ridiculous punctilio, the superflux of our strength and of our happiness. Unexpected discoveries in arts, or signal improvements in our manufactures, may invigorate us even while otherwise weakened by our contests, and enable us, when they are at an end, to improve to the utmost advantage, not only our own tranquillity, but the prosperity and repose of our neighbours. A little clay under the management of a Wedgewood, a little wood and wire in the hands of an Arkwright, and a little coal and water under the direction of a Watt, may raise up existence wherever these distinguished artists reside, and lay the civilized world under contribution to our island. In this manner may a strength be infused into our system, which may enable it to encounter diseases with which it may be attacked, or to bear up against that silent tendency to decay and death which nature has imposed upon every thing that is human. These great benefactors to our nation and to mankind may be induced, by our free government and equal laws, to reside where the produce of their genius and skill may be securely accumulated, and proudly and honourably enjoyed. But men like these are little assisted in their operations, or tempted to stay among us, by our national debt: the effects of it may, indeed, oblige them to leave us entirely; and poorly will their absence then be compensated by the presence of those who may remain, who have

driven

driven them from our shores—the impolitic supporters of Test Acts and Convention Bills—the unmeaning declaimers about security and compensation—the thoughtless voters of loans and subsidies—and the intemperate contrivers of unintelligible wars !

A mistake with respect to the nature and effects of a national debt, may be so fatal to the inhabitants of this country in their present situation, that an intelligent reader, it is presumed, will have read with patience what must to him have been extremely obvious, and consequently uninteresting—it is hoped that he will continue to be still further considerate and indulgent, while a few popular delusions on the same important subject are briefly noticed.

There is a confused idea continually repeated in conversation, that the money which is invested in the stocks is continually bought and sold and passed from one to another ; that all the public debt is thus in constant circulation among us ; and that, by the practice of funding, we in fact fabricate for ourselves a species of fictitious wealth, which answers all the purposes and procures to us all the advantages of so much real wealth. To all this it may be answered, that the money when lent by individuals to Government, is by Government paid away to equip and support fleets and armies, and to reward the labour of all those who are employed in the service of the State — that the legal instrument which any individual receives in return for his money, is only a representative of part of the money so spent ; that it proves his right to receive for ever the interest of that money, and no more—that this right he may transfer to another whenever he pleases ; and that a transfer of this right is all that is meant, when it is said that stock is sold—that a second individual may purchase this right from its present possessor, by giving him what is thought an equivalent ; and that this is all which

is done when stock is bought — that money cannot lie in the stocks and be in circulation at the same time — that if one person sells stock to put the money he receives for it into circulation, another person must take money out of circulation to purchase the stock so sold — that the mutual accommodation of the parties is all the advantage which the State receives — that our national debt in no other sense can be said to circulate among us — that the original money cannot have been *spent* by Government, and yet still be found *unspent* at the Stock Exchange — that it is dissipated all over the world, and is now no longer, as it originally was, in the possession of Great Britain — that what Government have to produce in return for the money that has been expended, is, the battles that were fought to check the ambition of Louis XIV, the victories of Marlborough, the triumphs of Lord Chatham, the loss of America, our defeats in Flanders, our successes by sea, the protection of our commerce, and the peaceful possession of our island. The money spent and wasted is no longer to be found; and the legal instruments which the present creditors of the nation hold, do no more, as has been already said, than represent separate parts of the original money that was lent, and, when lent, was taken from the capital of the country for ever. To the present capital it may indeed be restored; but only by an equal diminution of the present capital. I may sell stock, and, with the money received, found a manufactory; but some other individual, out of the profits perhaps of his industry, must first purchase my stock, and give me the money which I am so to use in return for my stock. The existing capital must be first diminished, before it can be afterwards increased, and is not therefore on the whole affected. But the answer which has thus been given to the first popular mistake we have noticed, will appear to countenance and support the reasoning on which another delusion, not less generally to be observed in society, is founded. A caution therefore must now be

imme-

immediately given, lest by the demolition of one error we cause the establishment of another.

The money which originally belonged to the stockholder is, no doubt, spent; but is considered by him as always in his possession. It is so considered, because, by means of the legal instrument he holds, he can always get the money which it represents; that is, the stock is always looked upon by him as actual money, because he can always find some other individual who will give him actual money for it; and on this account his expences are precisely the same as if he had always the guineas, for which the stock would sell, in his bureau. The stock produces to him a regular interest, and is to him the same, though not to the nation, as if it was lent on bond to a manufacturer or merchant. Care therefore must be taken not to suppose, because the money has been spent, that it on that account ceases to influence his mode of life, and the quantity and quality of the articles which he consumes. If the minister were to come to a stock-holder, and say, "You have no longer 1000*l.* in the 3 per cents, but here is the value of your 1000*l.* in cash;" he would not consider himself as on that account richer, but he would learn with pleasure, that the minister would be no longer obliged to lay a tax to pay him the interest of the money he had lent to Government; and that, when he went to buy an article, that part of the price of it, which had before gone to pay that interest, would now no longer be wanted. On this account he would know that he was in fact made richer; but not richer nominally; and in the popular acceptation of the word, he would not imagine that 1000*l.* had been given him, which was not in his possession before. And these distinctions being made, the delusion which has been already announced, may now be mentioned: it is this—that, if the national debt were to be paid to-morrow, every man would have so much the more money, and therefore pay so much the more for every thing

thing he wanted; the price of every article would rise, till every thing would find its level, and we should be just where we were before. Every man is, in this reasoning, put for every stock-holder, not one of whom would consider himself as having more money; and so far from the price of every article rising, and our being, as it is called, just where we were before, we should all of us soon discover, that for less money we could purchase more of the comforts and necessaries of life, and consequently have a much larger surplus than we formerly had, to put the industry of every man around us into motion.

A more dangerous error still remains to be noticed.— It is continually affirmed, that the greatest part of the money which is borrowed for a war is paid away to our soldiers and sailors, at our dock-yards or at quarters; that the money comes again into circulation, and never travels out of the island; that it is never lost by the State, and that we are as rich as before. But let those who reason thus, consider for a moment what would be the effect if we were all soldiers and sailors. There would then be evidently no one to pay us, to feed or to cloathe us; nothing would be produced; the situation of the island would be that of perfect ruin: and this ruin will evidently be made less in proportion to the number of men who are divested of this supposed occupation of soldiers and sailors, and made into ploughmen, manufacturers, or sailors on board merchants' ships; or who, in other words, are made to produce something, or to carry the surplus of our produce to others. If all were in this manner employed, there would be no man whose industry would not then contribute to the wealth of the whole community. A soldier's has not this effect: the nation loses the benefit of any strength or ingenuity he may possess. He is not useful *himself*, except as he defends those who are. This is the first loss that a nation suffers by increasing her army and her marine. But
this

this is not all—they must be paid, and fed, and cloathed, and armed; that is, the profits of those who labour, instead of being added immediately to their own present capitals, and enabling them to get more, must be given to our soldiers and expended in red coats and firelocks, helmets and horses; or blown away about the skies in balls and in gunpowder.

It is not meant to be inferred from these observations, that soldiers and sailors are useless, for they defend us; or, that they deserve not what they receive, for they receive but little. All that is urged, is, that they can produce nothing themselves, and that they consume the produce of those that do; and, that consequently the more of them we are obliged or think it necessary to employ and maintain, the poorer we shall be, and the less able to become rich.

These are the principal mistakes that are observable on this important subject; there may be others unnoticed, but none that will perplex those who have sufficiently comprehended what has been already said.

The chief, and perhaps the only positive advantage attendant upon a national debt, is, that capitalists and opulent merchants can place their money in the funds, when they have no more lucrative mode of immediately employing it; and that the money so invested, being the most transferable of any species of property, may, with the greatest ease, and, in general, with little loss or inconvenience, be called in, and its destination changed, as the exigencies or conveniences of commerce may require. But the salutary effect that is from hence derived to the general cause of commerce, is dreadfully overbalanced by the temptation and the power which the funding system at the same time affords to the nations of Europe, to destroy the population, the produce, and the prosperity of each other.

Such is the nature of a national debt, and such the operation of an annual tax upon the produce and the consumption, or, in other words, upon the quantity of life and comfort which is to be found in a community. The reader, before he finally decides on the conduct of our minister at the close of 1792, should consider for a moment, after seeing what the effects of a public debt are, what in fact was at that important crisis the existing debt of Great Britain. Mr. Pitt knew it to be 257 millions; the annual interest which was to be paid (or the faith of Parliament and the honour of the nation was to be for ever destroyed) amounted to something more than nine millions. But our minister was at the same time aware, that the charge of the King's Civil List, of the establishments of our army, navy, ordnance, and other necessary and contingent expences of government, could not well be stated at a less annual sum than six millions; or, at least, that the whole expenditure of government was fifteen millions per annum. These were to be paid, or the Constitution was to be new modified and destroyed. So that Mr. Pitt must have been conscious before we began the war, that fifteen millions were annually to be collected from the people of this country by taxes, the effects of which have been already delineated; and, that the public engagements in reality amounted, not to 257 millions, but to 428 millions. It has been already remarked, that the increase of this debt, which it was evident would be the consequence of a war, ought powerfully to have influenced his mind, and compelled him to have considered a rupture with France as the last resort. What has been the consequence of his outstripping in insanity the wildest of those demagogues whom he was at that time holding up to the public detestation and derision? The national debt, even if the Emperor's loan, which we have guaranteed, be excluded, has been increased ninety millions*; our annual expences † cannot in future

* The increase, including the Emperor's loan, is 101,504,041. Vide Facts, &c. by Mr. Morgan, page 8.

† Mr. Morgan states them at 32 millions.

fall short of eighteen millions : our national honour must be annihilated, and our Constitution destroyed ; or we have at this moment, even if no further loan is necessary for the ensuing campaign, and allowing for the sums paid off by the Sinking Fund, a national debt which no estimate can possibly diminish below the sum of 510 millions.

These facts are not mentioned as a proof that the war was originally unnecessary, but they are brought to prove, that this necessity should be distinctly shewn and incontrovertibly demonstrated by those who think favourably of the merits of our minister. The real question at issue is not, whether the Convention, transported with the success of their arms, and passing decrees by acclamation, were originally guilty of acts of folly, offence, or even of aggression ; but whether their subsequent explanations were such as rendered further negotiation impossible ; and whether no calm expostulations, no temperate remonstrances, no prudence, no magnanimity on our part, could have drawn from them such concessions as would have enabled us to avoid hostilities without dishonour.

Let us not deceive ourselves, or suppose, because we have been fighting and funding for the last century, that the practice may be continued for ever. The hair by which the sword that trembles over us is suspended, will not on that ac-

* Our national debt at the end of 1792, was, in fact, 428 millions.

Supposing no loan necessary for the next year, and exclusive of the Emperor's loan, our expence in four years has been ninety millions—a rate of destruction quite as great as Lord North's, which was 170 millions in nine years.

Our national debt ought at this time to be estimated at 516 millions.

} Such was the wisdom of our minister in beginning the war.

} Such has been the skill of our minister in conducting the war.

} And such is the policy of our minister in continuing the war.

count sustain a second or a heavier; and no man who loves his King, the Constitution, his friends, his children, or himself, should delay for a moment to use every legal method to procure the re-establishment of peace; or be persuaded to repose in silence, and without effort, in compliance with those Swiss-arguments, that will fight in the cause of any ministers and any political system whatever, and may be employed by them and by ourselves to the day of our common destruction. The general character of our nation is that of humanity; but occasionally, it must be confessed, we seem little entitled to this honourable distinction. Too fond of military glory, or too easily deluded and inflamed, we have been always lovers of war, and are still too inattentive to its consequences, not merely with respect to others but even to ourselves. We have talked of starving a whole nation, with a calm complacency that was surely little congenial to the genuine feelings of human nature. We have seen the Duke of Brunswick, at the head of an hostile army, rush into the plains of an independent kingdom, to punish its subjects and to settle its government. We have seen the Russians, and another of our allies, consign a helpless and unoffending people to despair and chains, with an indignation, which, if felt, produced no murmur; and with a pity, which, if it really was excited in our bosoms, was followed by no public effort*.

In this happy island we know not what it is to have our villages in flames, our harvests seized upon, our social comforts destroyed, the enemy at our gates, their bayonets at our breasts. War is with us little more than an inflammatory speech from some respectable enthusiast, a fiery declamation from some popular minister, an eager vote, a ready loan, an armament, and a gazette. The sufferings of our enemies find no entrance to our

* This observation will not involve in its censure the illustrious few, who distinguished themselves from their countrymen on this afflicting occasion.

thoughts ; the tears of our widows, the sighs of our orphans, are unmarked amid the uproar of our fancied triumphs, or lost and forgotten amid our business and our pleasures. Our national debt produces not as yet that ruin and anarchy, to which, by a steady, though silent, operation, it constantly tends ; and after having thrown away our own treasure, after having presumed to mortgage the industry of our innocent posterity, after having wasted, to no useful end, the generous ardour, the fearless perseverance, and the valuable lives of our gallant countrymen, we sit down thoughtless and contented, and in a few years are prepared and willing again to start up and run over the same disgusting and dangerous round of injustice, cruelty and madness.

The establishment of a Sinking Fund to diminish our national debt, has been always considered as a measure of itself sufficient to endear Mr. Pitt to the inhabitants of these kingdoms. There is no doubt that a minister can seldom be so well employed as when directing his attention to an object so eminently important. The beneficial effect of a Sinking Fund, or the consequence of taking off a tax, may be shewn by proceeding in an opposite direction, and by tracing the same line of reasoning that was used in exhibiting the injurious operation of a tax imposed. The effect in the latter case is analogous to that produced by indenting the bark and stopping the communication between the earth and the body of a tree—the trunk sickens, the branches decay, the top withers, the tree expires. In the former case, to that produced by the rise of the sap and the nutritive propagation of the juices—the trunk is invigorated, the branches shoot out into luxuriance, the top is crowned with verdure, and the tree is clothed with beauty and strength. On this account it may be said with truth, that by the establishment of a Sinking Fund Mr. Pitt has deserved, and he has very amply received, the approbation of his countrymen. It may with equal

equal reason be affirmed, that by this single measure he has done more to promote their happiness, than by all the flowing declamations he has ever uttered ; and more to guard and perpetuate the Constitution, than by all the armaments he has prepared, the wars he has undertaken, the alarms he has raised, the arbitrary bills he has passed, or all the plots and trials by which his reputation has been sullied and his understanding brought into suspicion. Yet must our praise, with respect to his measure of a Sinking Fund, be given with the most considerable qualifications and abatements. His conduct even on this occasion is incumbered with that passion for popularity which has so often persuaded him to suffer the public to be in fact deceived, and with that poverty of spirit which seems never to allow him to act without disguise, or to speak without a purpose ; and which, indeed, in this instance, has prevented him, not merely from being generous, but even from being just. Mr. Pitt was conscious that the public conceived that, in consequence of the return of peace and his financial skill, there was a clear surplus in the revenue of a million, which was annually to be directed to the most beneficial of all purposes, the accelerated reduction of the national debt. What appears to have been the truth ? That no such surplus ever really existed. That it was always predicted and presumed upon, not actually found, or regularly arising, either from the increase of our income, or the diminution of our expenditure ; and that, in consequence of this appropriation of a supposed surplus to the Sinking Fund, there was annually in the revenue a considerable deficiency. That these deficiencies *, in the first five years, exceeded six

* In 1786,	—	2,321,661l.
1787,	—	1,112,169l.
1788,	—	1,216,130l.
1789,	—	1,122,131l.
1790,	—	558,597l.

Vide Morgan's Review of Dr. Price's Writings, page 59.

millions ;

millions ; that, in the last three years, they amounted nearly to two millions ; and that they have been hitherto supplied by loans and extraordinary receipts *. The surplus of a million should have been secured by taxes, as Dr. Price originally recommended ; but our minister chose to see his measure maimed and crippled in its operation, and rendered almost wholly inefficient, rather than run a risque of a trifling diminution of his popularity, by the imposition of a burden on the country, which would, in this case alone, have been salutary and calculated for their relief. The public, he knew, would be unwilling to pursue, and unable to comprehend, the meaning of his annual evolutions, through debts funded and unfunded, tontines and loans, lotteries and exchequer-bills, quarters anticipated and quarters in arrear, duties respited and sums remaining, and all the inextricable labyrinth of items which constitute the accounts of a minister of finance. The weight of a new tax he was satisfied they would certainly feel, though its beneficial operation they might want ability to comprehend. The full credit of the measure he already enjoyed ; and therefore no generous uneasiness under praise not completely deserved, no consciousness of the duty he owed the public and posterity, ever urged him to suffer our difficulties to be fairly avowed and effectually encountered.

Yet with his own ability and virtue was our minister so completely enraptured, that he expressed an hope in the House of Commons, " that he should have his name inscribed on a pillar to public credit, as its preserver and restorer." The real history of the transaction, as it is now well known, may reasonably induce us to question the pro-

* About eight millions. Vide Morgan's Review, pages 60 and 61. It is pleasing to conclude, from the appearance of his last publication, that Mr. Morgan is not likely to suffer his indignation to triumph over his patriotism. He judges of himself and others with less accuracy than of the national debt, if he supposes that there are many who have ability and information enough to succeed to his post, if it should by him be unhappily abandoned.

priety of the hope, and the modesty of the panegyric. The reduction of the national debt was known to be a favourite idea of Lord Lansdowne, and was one of those beneficial measures which ought to have procured the confidence of the public to that able and enlightened statesman. Yet there can be no doubt, that the attention of Lord Lansdowne, as well as of Mr. Pitt himself, had been originally directed to this measure by the writings of Dr. Price. It was this intelligent philanthropist that Mr. Pitt, when he came into office, thought proper to summon to his assistance. A plan which he was already in possession of, he submitted to the Doctor's consideration. He was by the Doctor convinced of its faults and inexpediency; it was abandoned, and one of three plans for the reduction of the debt, which the Doctor, not Mr. Pitt, proposed, was adopted. This plan was the worst, and it was rendered less efficient by subsequent regulations.

Such were the obligations of the minister to an amiable and intelligent man, whose name was to have found no place in the inscription of the pillar to national credit, while the minister's was to be preserved and recorded for the admiration of ages: and neither on this nor on any other public occasion did Mr. Pitt feel a pleasure in acknowledging his gratitude, and in introducing the merits of his enlightened teacher to the applauses of the public. Yet, there have been occasions when it might have been useful to many of his countrymen to have known, that an humble individual might have ability enough to instruct a minister, though unequal to the task of comprehending the necessary connection of Church and King; and patriotism enough to labour, and to labour with success, for the happiness of the community, though probably an enemy of the Test Act, and indisputably a dissenter from the Church of England.

Such then are the general merits of the administration
of

of Mr. Pitt—such is the claim of our minister to the approbation of his countrymen. The purity of his motives, his patriotism and his virtue, may be left to the decision of that great tribunal where alone they can be accurately examined and truly known; but his ability as a minister must be necessarily left to us to appreciate and decide upon; a subject of fair discussion, an object of very reasonable doubt. “*Omnium consensu dignus imperio nisi imperasset,*” is the character of one of the Roman Emperors, as delineated by the historian Tacitus. Mr. Pitt might in like manner have been thought capable of ruling, had he never ruled. The promise of his early talents has not been fulfilled; and if we still admire, it is the triumph of partiality over experience. For his ability it seems impossible to contend, if we attentively survey all his administration, and reflect at the same time, that he has been a minister with such advantages as no other minister ever yet possessed. A most singular concurrence of circumstances has at all times thrown every thing into his power, and left every thing at his devotion. Yet has he, from the first, condescended to adopt such petty tricks, expedients and finesses as his mind, if it had been really vigorous and great, must at all times have rejected with contempt.

In the conduct of Mr. Pitt, there is never found that fearless simplicity, that dignified candour, which are the genuine offspring of an elevated mind, and the true criterion of real wisdom. It is these that incline and enable others to meet our wishes and accede to our proposals. It is these that leave those, for whom we act, nothing to complain of; and those whom we oppose, nothing to accuse. Ministers who are influenced by these principles, have no occasion to appeal for the propriety of their measures to the sanction they have received from their majorities in Parliament; and are under no necessity continually to refuse papers, and stop enquiries—for they have nothing to conceal, and they are unwilling to deceive.

From the first opening of the French Revolution to the present hour, Mr. Pitt has at no time displayed that commanding foresight which marks a superior mind, or that controlling prudence which we have a right to expect in him who undertakes the management of the interests of millions. The moderate men, at no time, in either country, has he supported as he ought; and he has been neutral and temporising, when he should have been fixed and decisive; and daring and impetuous, when he should have been cautious and composed.

At no season has he ever endeavoured to stem the torrent of public prejudices, or to make the people calm and wise, when they were inflamed and ignorant. The stream of public opinion he has always submitted patiently and diligently to watch, and to float upon its surface, not direct its course where wisdom or patriotism might suggest. The nonsense of the Test Act, the rubbish of the Penal Laws, the corruption of our Representation, in him find a statesman ever ready to step out in their defence and support under the ready and impenetrable shield of existing circumstances. The mind of the nation, under his auspices, makes no advances: he turns its ignorance or its prejudices to his own advantage—he labours not to correct them at the hazard of his own power. No sentiment has he ever uttered, to no plan has he ever adhered, which can be shewn to have been inconsistent at the time with what he may have supposed to be his interest as a minister. Attachment to their situation is the universal fault, the vulgar motive of all the little ministers that have ever disgraced the cabinets of princes: yet by this wretched principle has the conduct of Mr. Pitt been uniformly governed and directed. Thus the original Irish Propositions are abandoned, because the prejudices of our manufacturers are to be opposed and disregarded. The principles of toleration are adopted or rejected ac-

cording to the convenience of the moment: indulgence is refused to the Dissenters in England, because their numbers are insignificant; it is granted to the Catholics in Ireland, because they are formidable. The abolition of the Slave Trade is carefully disclaimed as any measure of Administration, lest the treasury-bench might be affected by the consequences: and this measure, after having, in deference to the petitions of the people, been carried triumphantly through the House of Commons, is suffered silently to expire in the House of Lords. Throughout the whole of Mr. Pitt's administration, we may discern the skilful parliamentary leader, the attentive observer of "times and seasons," the modulator of the notes of the House of Commons; but we never behold the instructor of nations, or the enlightened minister of a great people. He has eloquence, but not wisdom; a love of patronage and power, no enlarged or dignified ambition, and all the rashness and insolence of genius, without its sensibilities or its force.

The inhabitants of this country have been chiefly misled in their opinion of the ability of Mr. Pitt, by too inconsiderate an admiration of his talents as an orator. Yet they should always have considered, that he who is eloquent is not necessarily wise. The presumption is in favour of a contrary supposition. A power of combining and diversifying a few general ideas, a ready supply of glittering language, a fertile imagination, and a retentive memory, are qualities which will make an orator as perfect as Mr. Pitt, but not perhaps a greater statesman or a more enlightened minister. The greatest strength of memory is not unfrequently united with weakness of judgment; it is the weight, not the variety of ideas, with which wisdom is concerned; she is suspicious of a multitude of words, lest she should be deceived and bewildered.

Amplification is the great business of eloquence, while the first occupation of wisdom is to reduce every thing, if possible, to its original elements.—Enthusiasm is the soul of the one, calmness the essence of the other. The one distinguishes not, examines not, hesitates not, reflects not—the other is cautious, scrupulous, patient, and deliberative. Eloquence, like Mr. Pitt, defends a bad and a good cause with equal promptitude and grace. Wisdom, like Mr. Fox, if conscious that she is required to “make the worse appear the better reason,” is evidently deprived of her accustomed energies, is embarrassed and is silent. In the French character, before the Revolution, there was always found eloquence, seldom wisdom—in the English, the reverse. The reviver of American taxation, and the consequent author of the American war was Charles Townshend—“the delight of the House of Commons.”—The measures of Lord North will be long remembered with regret—“yet he pleased the ear*.”

But the writer of these pages must no longer intrude upon the patience of the reader. It is time that he should put an end to this consideration of the talents of Mr. Pitt, no longer advert upon, or further pursue the various subjects with which such an investigation is naturally connected. The puerile indifference, and the fatal neutrality with which our minister surveyed the opening and the progress of the French Revolution, and the long projected interference of the combined powers, have been already remarked. The impolicy

* There seems an eloquence of the mind, as well as an eloquence of the tongue. Nothing can be more distinguishable than the oratory of Mr. Pitt from that of Mr. Fox, Mirabeau, Demosthenes, and Lord Chatham. If we retire from the speech of Mr. Fox, our conceptions are enlarged, we have food for contemplation—the impression which our judgment has received can never be obliterated. If we endeavour, on the contrary, to report the speech of Mr. Pitt to another, or to recollect it for ourselves, the splendid vision we shall find is fading every moment from our view, and can never be recalled. Mr. Fox, like the Pantheon, may be described and represented. Mr. Pitt, like Music, must be heard.

with

with which he sanctioned and nourished, by not disapproving, the unhappy intemperance of Mr. Burke, has been noted ; as well as the blindness with which he withheld his patronage and protection from the moderate men in this country, from the first appearance of "The Reflections" to the breaking out of the war. The conduct which Mr. Pitt should naturally have pursued during the latter months of 1792, has been traced : and the dangerous system of alarm and violence, which he adopted, has been recalled to the recollection of the reader. The confused multitude of weak and inconclusive arguments which were resorted to in the senate, and admitted in society, at that unfortunate crisis, as solid and irrefragable reasons for the commencement of the war, have been briefly reviewed ; and the evidence of our disposition to hostilities, which appears in the debates of Parliament, if debates they could then be called, has been briefly noticed. A reference has been made to the public letters of Lord Grenville and M. Chauvelin ; and from them it has been shewn how little we have a right to declare, that the war was on our part just ; still less to assert, that further negotiation was either impossible or unpromising, and that therefore the war was necessary. The inconsistencies of our public declarations have been observed, and the various pretexts for hostilities that have been successively adopted and abandoned, employed and cashiered. The injury, which every cause except that of the Convention, received from the contradictory and ambiguous, and therefore unjust, impolitic and (whatever might be his intentions) cruel conduct of our minister during the prosecution of the war, has been generally shewn and lamented. Our just, respectful, and enlightened treatment of neutral and independent nations—our alliances, our subsidies, and our loans, have been alluded to. The little benefit which Mr. Pitt seems to have drawn from the example of those awful, but not inexplicable, events, which have been exhibited on the theatre of France, has been noticed. The total
want

want of dispatch and vigour in the executive conduct of the war, appeared too glaring to require a comment, and the reader must have perceived with pleasure that he was allowed to turn from such a wilderness of horrors. Some general reasonings on the subject of government have been hazarded, to which the conduct of Mr. Pitt might be easily applied; and the effects of the popularity of a minister upon his own mind, and the welfare of the community, the merit of timely reforms, the policy of laws that impose silence, and of prosecutions that cannot be supported, have been transiently surveyed and briefly described. The nature and consequences of a national debt, and some popular mistakes upon the subject, have been considered. The injury which every separate thread in society receives from the operation of a tax, and the process by which that injury is propagated and extended, however it may be counteracted and unobserved through the whole texture, has been distinctly represented. The effects therefore have been at the same time shewn, which every war must necessarily have upon the action and re-action of our consumption and produce—or, in other words, upon the sum of happiness and existence that is at any time to be found upon the island. With these it has been noted, that the interests of the Constitution itself are now completely interwoven. The effect which such considerations should have produced upon the minds of our ministers, prior to the commencement and during the continuance of hostilities, has been remarked. The real amount of the national debt has been mentioned. The propriety and the gratitude with which the author of the existing war, and the pupil of Dr. Price, can hope to derive immortality from the operation of the present scheme to reduce the national debt, has been shortly stated; and a slight criticism upon the particular nature and value of the personal qualities and talents of Mr. Pitt, as connected with his public character, has been added. The claim therefore of our minister to the favour and appro-
bation

bation of his countrymen, has been generally discussed—the merits of his administration have been delineated—the portrait is submitted to the reader, traced with no ungenerous minuteness, laboured with no malignant industry; and if to a more accurate observer there should in any part of this picture appear a colouring more bold than his own survey of the original might have led him to expect, some allowance may be extended to the emotions of the artist, whose pencil might be betrayed, while his mind was warmed with indignation, or hurried into disgust, by the contemplation of a form, which he was conscious had been long the idol, and was still the favourite of his countrymen; while to him it appeared without beauty and without strength, with no simplicity to engage, no elegance to charm—fierce in its mien, and unnatural in its gestures—a form, which spread destruction as it moved; which it was impossible to admire, which it was still more impossible to love.

It is not easy, indeed, to ascertain what precise degree of folly the counsels of the Emperor may reach, or how far Mr. Pitt may presume upon the partiality of the people of Great Britain. It cannot readily be determined how long the inhabitants of an industrious, manufacturing, and commercial kingdom may be content to be pushed forward towards the gulph down which they may be precipitated; or to what extent of infatuation they may persevere in a war, which cannot but be attended with effects the most injurious, which if long protracted may be followed by consequences the most dreadful, and which will certainly render a revolution inevitable to their posterity, if future ministers are as unable, or as little disposed to pursue the real interests of their country. The public seem paralysed by their confidence in their rulers, or by the remains of that alarm with which they were once agitated, and which in them at least was assuredly real. They seem unwilling to resort to the most regular modes of seeking

ing redress, which the forms of our Government prescribe and sanction. Yet, when Parliament is next dissolved; when the Constitution will itself disable us from persevering in this base neutrality, this criminal indifference to every thing which we ought to hold dear and sacred; when those members who have supported our minister will again apply to us for our suffrage and approbation, and we shall be compelled to attest publicly our opinion of the measures of Administration; surely it may be hoped, that to discountenance those measures will no longer be thought an unequivocal indication of a secret disposition to anarchy and confusion; to deny the justice and necessity of the war, no longer a proof of disloyalty to the Sovereign; to question the power of this country to continue it with safety to herself or benefit to others, no longer an indication of attachment to our enemies:—and even if our minister shall have then condescended, from whatever motive, to restore to us and to our Constitution the advantages of a peace; or, if our enemies, on the contrary, shall themselves, in their turn, become imperious and unreasonable; whether the war be or be not concluded, on whatever account continued, or by whatever infatuation protracted; surely it will be found, that delusion has its limits, and partiality its bounds; that the real nature of our minister's talents is understood, the importance of his office comprehended, the situation of the country known, and that there will be no elector in Great Britain who shall then be called to decide upon the merits of Mr. Pitt, who will not have capacity enough to understand the injury which himself, his countrymen, and posterity have received, and virtue and independence enough constitutionally to resent it as he ought.

March 1, 1796.

C. F.

F I N I S.

